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University of Alberta

Native Indian Leadership from Within

by

Nell Jean Irwin

A thesis

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Department of Educational Administration

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1992

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Date 26th March, 1992

Abstract

In accordance with current government devolution policy, an increasing number of Canadian Native Indian bands are assuming responsibility for the management of their own education systems. Fundamental to the assumption of local control is the question of management frameworks and leadership structures. The phenomenon of on-site Native educational leadership evolved without historical precedence, operational guideline, or financed training programs.

The limited research studies previously conducted on Native educational leadership indicated that the task of leadership in locally controlled systems is highly complex.

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership practices developed by the Alexander Cree community in its determination to control an on-site education system which truly reflected Native culture and values. Specifically, the on-site naturalistic inquiry in the form of a case study focused on the perceptions, experiences, and realities of Native and non-Native leaders during the day-to-day evolution of events and transmissions within the context of the Kipohtakaw Community Education Centre.

The research highlighted a perspective of multiple levels of leadership which emanated from the cultural context of the community itself. This collaborative cultural leadership combined Native values and behaviours with Native and non-Native leadership models to build coalitions of learners and leaders to promote effective leadership from within the community.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Background to the Study

Introduction and Background

Education on Canadian reserves is traditionally the responsibility of the federal government of Canada through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. DIAND is an acronym for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and will be frequently used in this study. DIAND is responsible for the education of Indian and Inuit students through the implementation of five programs which encompass federally operated schools, band-operated schools, provincial schools, post-school institutions, and cultural education centres.

The evolutionary development of Indian education from 1600 to 1970 is depicted in the literature as a saga of imposition and alienation which assumed new shapes in the various changes from mission schools to boarding schools to integration with public schools, but retained the same ingredients of acculturation.

During the 1960s widespread dissatisfaction with education services provided by the government prompted Native people to consider options. In 1969 the institution of a government policy entitled "A Plan to Liquidate Canada's Indian Problem in 25 Years" aimed to shift control and responsibility for Indians to the provinces. The policy also signalled government intention to abrogate the special constitutional status of Indians guaranteed to them by the treaties and the British North America Act of 1867. The reaction of Indian people to this legislation recorded a significant shift from a position of passive

recipients of imposed educational systems to unified affirmative action towards local control of education programs. Their policy statement, Indian Control of Indian Education, presented by the National Indian Brotherhood on behalf of all Indian peoples stated, in part:

> Indian parents must have full responsibility and control of education.
>
> The Federal government must adjust its policy and practices to make possible the full participation and partnership of Indian people in all decisions and activities connected with the education of Indian children. This requires determined and enlightened action on the part of the Federal government and immediate reform, especially in the following areas of concern: responsibility, programs, teachers and facilities. (N.I.B., 1972, p. 3)

A resolution passed in 1981 by the N.I.B. and re-affirmed by the Assembly of First Nations initiated the implementation of the Indian Control of Indian Education policy published in 1972. The Indian Education Paper--Phase 1 (DIAND, 1982) stated: "With the realization of the inherent desirability of parental responsibility and local control the Department encourages Indian control of Indian education" (p. 4). This prompted Native Indian communities to establish local education systems which would reflect their cultural priorities and thereby assist them to determine their own educational destinies.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined the leadership practices developed by the Alexander community in its challenge of transforming federally imposed education to a locally controlled, community-involved Kipohtakaw Education Centre.

The purpose of the study was to discover some answers to the following research question:

What are the leadership practices at one locally controlled community education centre?

A number of more specific questions served to guide the direction of the study. These questions are as follows:

1. How do the leaders of this band-controlled community education centre manage the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the educational program?

    a. What is the language of instruction?

    b. What is the structure for relationships between program planning and implementation, and the procedures, understanding, and interpretation of testing?

2. How do the leaders of this community education centre manage resources?

    a. What are the procedures for the selection, recruitment, training, and management of personnel?

    b. What are the processes for decision making and problem resolution related to management of finance?

    c. What are the procedures for the acquisition and maintenance of facilities?

3. What is the nature of the relationship of the school board to the school community?

Although these questions served to define the limits of the study, flexibility in the design encouraged the exploration of other questions during the initial phases of data collection.

Justification for the Study

The government was committed to local control of education, and, according to N.I.B. (1988a), "Under its current devolution plans, the federal government hopes that most of the federal schools will become First Nation-controlled schools in the next five years and most students in provincial schools will transfer to First Nation schools" (p. 133). This prediction was supported by Green (1990), who stated: "If the present trend continues it is expected that by 1992 almost 100% of all 'Indian Affairs Schools' in Canada will be band operated (parentally controlled)" (p. 37).

Consistent with this trend, Matthew (1990) reported that an increasing number of "communities have been working toward ensuring that all decision making with respect to education is within their control and that the schooling process reflects the cultural and political interest of the communities" (p. 96). However, the transfer of jurisdiction over education had attracted minimal resources for the development and support of educational leadership structures. Legislative and administrative changes to establish local leadership structures to manage the devolved control of education continued to be unclear.

Furthermore, the lack of training was identified by Pauls (1984) as a major problem associated with band control of education, and he reflected that

> it is a pity that there is no national policy or national institute to provide training to Indians which would enable them to manage their own educational system. One of the primary effects of lack of training is that of bands taking over control of the schools and not knowing how to manage the school. (p. 35)

As pointed out by Power (1989), historical injustices have imposed a serious cultural and educational deprivation of technical, professional, and administrative skills, and "it is a mistake to think that indigenous peoples can or want to achieve cultural independence alone in an increasingly interdependent world in which mutual co-operation is needed to reach an acceptable educational level" (p. 49).

It was clearly evident that an increasing number of Native Indian bands were assuming responsibility for creating and managing their own education systems with uncertain management frameworks, limited resources for leadership training, and few appropriate educational leadership models. As stated by Jules (1988), "young people need strong role models to develop their leadership potential. . . . The only models of leadership readily available to trainers and students are those developed in the non-native Indian cultures (usually that of North America)" (p. 4).

The researcher asserts that, by identifying different leadership practices, we can learn more about effective Native leadership and thereby improve leadership of band-controlled education systems. This assertion is supported by Jules (1988), who claimed that

> progress in the direction of "Indian Control of Indian Education" is occurring. . . . In view of the progress, it is suggested that a better understanding of Native Indian leadership gained from existing literature and Native Indian leaders' views on leadership can improve leadership in Band-controlled schools. (p. 12)

The study undertaken explored Native and non-Native views on leadership and investigated measures created at the local level to co-ordinate and manage a community education centre.

As contended by Jules (1988), "it is within the cultural and historical context that the study of Native Indian leadership in Native Indian education can be appreciated" (p. 7). As Native Indian people assumed control of their own education systems, they were confronted by a different and awesome challenge of educational leadership. The researcher believes that this study of leadership practices at the Kipohtakaw Community Education Centre will provide a model for Indian educational leadership which will assist and enrich individual and collective potential for strong and well-informed leadership of locally controlled educational systems.

Delimitations

1. This case study was delimited to the exploration of leadership experiences and observations of key personnel in one band-controlled community education centre.

2. It was delimited to the history, characteristics, and environmental factors which fashion the individuality of this community education centre.

3. The study was delimited to an investigation of leadership practices in one band-controlled community education centre in 1991.

4. The study was delimited to a case study naturalistic inquiry methodology.

Limitations

1. The study was limited by the willingness of the respondents to share their experiences, their beliefs, and their perceptions with the researcher, and their ability to recall events.

2. The study was limited by the period of time during which data were collected.

3. The study was limited by the skill and knowledge of the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews.

Assumptions

1. A major assumption underlying this study was that sufficient data would be collected during the period of time in which the study was conducted to reveal leadership practices at this community education centre.

2. It was assumed that the research topic orientation of leadership practices was appropriate for study purposes in this cultural setting.

3. It was assumed that the informants would be prepared to share their experiences with the researcher and that their perspectives of on-site leadership practices would be representative of wider community views.

4. It was assumed that the study would produce findings that the reader would be able to analytically interpret and generalise.

Chapter II

A Review of Related Literature

The literature reviewed was directly related to the research problem and fell into five general categories: a brief study of traditional Native education, traditional Native leadership characteristics, the evolution of locally controlled education, leadership challenges, and local control and leadership of educational change. The review considered periodicals, journals, books, government records, and community publications.

Traditional Native Education

As a background to this study of leadership practices, it was considered important to explore the traditional organisational context of Native education. According to Sergiovanni (1984), "Leadership and its organizational context are inseparable and thus it is difficult to understand one without the other" (p. 115). In describing the historical values of Native education, Armstrong (1987) drew attention to the incomparability of the modern definition of the practice of schooling with the traditional indigenous view of education related to life's experiences:

> Learning and teaching in the traditional view ensures cultural continuity and survival of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well being of the cultural unit and of its environment, the individual, the family, the community and the people as a whole. (p. 14)

This communitarian approach to education was further explained by Jules (1988), who stated: "Traditionally, our people's . . . teachings addressed the total being, the whole community in the context of a

viable culture" (p. 6). In a similar vein, Malloch (1984) described the nature of the educational order in this way:

> In the traditional way of life people governed themselves largely in accordance with the laws of nature which had been known to them as a result of living on the land for generations. At the same time social order and the survival of the people were ensured through harmony and order not only in the relationships amongst [themselves] but also in relationships between the [people] and the land and the spiritual world. (p. 13)

The Native Indian people practiced what may be traditionally described as a wholistic approach to the teaching-learning process. As reported by Archibald (1984; cited in Jules, 1988):

> The elders were the most respected teachers; important things such as values and higher levels of knowledge about history and environment were told through their stories and private conversations with children. The Elders also undertook a major responsibility in preparing the younger generation for specialized roles. (p. 12)

This approach to education was described by Armstrong (1987) as a natural process which was integrated into the daily lifestyle and cultural meanings within the social unit. Armstrong stated:

> The learning necessary to maintain a peaceful co-operative unit had to function within the natural order of everyday living. Law and order in traditional indigenous cultures was a learned behaviour instilled through practical lessons as much as through spiritual practice. . . . The learning and practice of indigenous ritual, then, is integral to a fulfilled, healthy existence in a continuously productive environment. (pp. 17-18)

Traditional Native Leadership Characteristics

With a traditional emphasis on a communitarian and wholistic approach to education, leadership emerged from the cultural context of the community. Malloch (1984) noted that leaders were not appointed through a formal selection process, but they emerged from the natural

order and laws of nature as people who attracted followers: "Leaders emerged from among those who demonstrated exceptional skill and understanding grounded in their experience of life and the natural order" (p. 13). The specific personal qualities which attracted followers, according to Jules (1988), included integrity, honesty, and respect. Deloria and Lytle (1984; cited in Jules, 1988) stated that "traditionally, chiefs [leaders] possessed authority on the basis of influence [charisma] and continued efficacy. . . . Many non-Indians concluded that chiefs had some mystical, but absolute power over other members of the tribe" (p. 10). In reflecting on the effectiveness of traditional Native leadership, Manuel (1974) focused on the critical importance of the language of leadership:

> It is the people who make or break a leader. If he is giving voice to their souls they endow him with that status; if he fails to speak their minds he is forced out; if he encircles the people with confused zeal by running after every concern but their own, he may be tolerated but never respected or admired. (p. 142)

Manuel continued: "A leader who stands no taller than the rest of his people stands in the centre of a circle and speaks the voice of the minds and souls he hears around him" (p. 246). It is evident that the traditional characteristics of Native leadership emanated from what Armstrong (1987) described as the "indigenous philosophy which formed the spiritual basis for its preservation. . . . As a result, the full human potential was tapped in the individual, including abilities that seem beyond comprehension" (p. 18).

With this background of traditional Native education and leadership in mind, the researcher directed attention towards the literature related to the evolution of locally controlled education systems.

The Evolution of Locally Controlled Education Systems

The process of decentralisation of education for Native Indian Canadians grew out of the policy Indian Control of Indian Education developed and published by the National Indian Brotherhood (1972). The federal government responded to this policy by recognising the inherent desirability of parental responsibility and by encouraging local control of education (DIAND, 1982).

Subsequently, in the 1970s bands began to assume control of administration of all or part of respective education programs subject to the administrative, financial, and executive control of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. As contended by Ward (1986): "Indian control of Indian education proceeded more or less on an ad hoc basis. . . . The Bands were prevented from assuming full control of their own education as outlined in the Indian control of Indian education policy paper" (p. 14).

The resolution passed by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1981 and re-affirmed by the Assembly of First Nations to initiate the implementation of the Indian Control of Indian Education policy provided greater emphasis to local control. According to Pauls (1984), Indian people had the "opportunity to determine and direct their own education that would fulfill their socio-cultural aspirations and local needs" (p. 31). Some two years later Richardson and Richardson (1986) reported: "Indians throughout Canada are assuming control of their educational destiny with ever increasing fervor. Many of them are establishing systems that depend for the most part on total parental involvement" (p. 25).

It was apparent that a greater number of Native Indians were pursuing the opportunity to control their own educational destinies. However, the phenomenon of local control had evolved as a challenge to leadership without historical precedence or operational guideline. As stated by King (1981), "There is little documentation of the processes or problems in the relatively few cases of communities assuming local control of schools which are already in existence and have institutional histories as organizations within a centralized bureaucracy" (p. 74). While the federal government was committed in principle to a policy of devolution, the leadership structures for the on-site management of education systems were the subject of local determination and design. Furthermore, the literature highlighted a major question concerning the status of control in community schools and its implications for educational leadership practices.

Subsequent to the 1981 resolution to initiate implementation of the Indian Control of Indian Education policy, "the Government insisted that it should retain ultimate responsibility but enter into agreements with Bands capable of control" (Ward, 1986, pp. 12-13).

The Indian Education Paper--Phase 1 (DIAND, 1982) reaffirmed a government objective "to ensure quality education through Indian control by establishing operational policies consistent with the principles of Indian control and ministerial accountability for the expenditure of funds and the results achieved" (p. 4). The same publication identified the lack of definition of 'Indian control,' an inadequate management framework, and inferior funding levels as impediments to the government's reaching the objective.

Reiter (1990) described the essential feature of a Band Council as its power of local government. However, he pointed out that, like municipal corporations, their jurisdiction is limited to local matters, and they do not function with complete autonomy in local affairs.

> Given the circumstances the Band Council acts as an agent of the Minister and the representative of the Band with respect to the administration and delivery of certain federal programs for the benefit of Indians on Indian reserves. Band Councils serve as a central function when they are required to consent to the Minister's decisions when he exercises statutory authority over the reserve. (pp. 1-2)

This emphasis on ministerial management was reinforced in Clintberg's (1987) statement: "The question of local control whether in education or in other areas of Indian government is still not settled relative to the Canadian Constitution" (p. 25), while Bezeau (1989) contended that

> the government is firmly in control of the education of Canadian Indians by virtue of the Constitution Act, 1867, section 91(24), which gives the federal government the right to make laws for Indians. . . . Specific provisions for the education of Indians are contained in the Indian Act, a federal statute. (p. 92)

Furthermore, the National Indian Brotherhood (1988b) stated: "The federal government remains firm in its position that it can only delegate authority for First Nations to participate in and administer previously developed federal education programs and cannot allow First Nations to exercise control in any broader sense" (p. 97). Participants involved in the First Nations School Review, however, stated that "the federal government must determine the legal framework for the transfer of jurisdiction and management of the education program to First Nations" (p. 111).

Leadership Challenges and Local Control

The literature reviewed inquired into recent studies conducted on the jurisdiction and perceived leadership challenges emerging from local control of education systems. According to Matthew (1990), local leadership offers the potential for a very positive force in the development of First Nations communities:

> There are opportunities to reinforce cultural values and learnings, teach traditional skills and aboriginal languages, and to present to young people a positive view of First Nations history and culture, . . . opportunities to involve parents and community people in the schooling process. (p. 103)

According to Green (1990), a greater degree of flexibility available through local control to develop and implement policies and programs which reflect community culture and values would significantly influence change processes: "Therefore, the shape of Native education in Canada in the year 2000 and beyond will be a direct resolve of Native people to create their education in their own image" (p. 38). It was contended by Jules (1988) that "in the ideal Native Indian leadership tradition, Elders should be included and should stand beside the leaders. The 'circle' is complete if the knowledge and wisdom of Elders is utilized in the non-native society" (p. 11). In relation to leadership behaviour, Jules believed that Native Indian administrators would identify as colleagues with staff, offer maximum support, and involve teachers in decision-making processes.

Emerson (1987) expressed his belief that

> a key issue for education is <u>how</u> to provide students classroom learning experiences so that they could eventually achieve the simultaneous existence (living in two cultures) with minimum disruption in their lives and without suffering the loss of native identity or heritage. (p. 56)

In continuing, he recommended that educational programs for Native students should promote the integration of cognitive instruction with 'content'-oriented programs. This would encourage students to translate information and create meanings which were relevant to the community culture.

A belief strongly expressed by a number of writers, including Kirkness (1989) and Brandt (1989), emphasised an urgent need for leaders to encourage the renewal and maintenance of Native language. According to Kirkness, the importance of language as a means of transmitting the uniqueness of the culture is strongly adhered to by aboriginal peoples: "Language is a gift from the Creator. Embodied in aboriginal languages is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values and the fundamental notion of what is truth" (p. 27).

The primary problems associated with local control, according to the N.I.B. (1988b), "were related to obtaining adequate resources to provide the quality of education desired by the First Nation" (p. 52). In comparatively geographically isolated communities in which nearly everyone is related, the achievement of consensus in the interest of the maintenance of harmony is considered important. Regarding this point, the Canadian Educational Association (1984) suggested a specific political leadership challenge:

> One of the problems of local control has been the high degree of politicization found in band councils. Problems unrelated to education have sometimes been linked to the school, and in some cases, schools have been closed to protest inadequate reserve facilities or to increase levels of social assistance. (p. 80)

The literature provided a number of examples of positive and effective leadership control of local education systems. Gardner (1986)

reported that "the Seabird school is a fine example of implementing Indian Control of Indian Education and is moving progressively towards achieving its goals" (p. 31). In continuing, Gardner explained that "School Board policy statements seemed to reflect a dichotomy between goals of education that are culturally related and goals of education that are academically related" (p. 30). The N.I.B. (1988b) stated that "the fact that the Kipohtakaw Education Centre is community based has contributed to its success" (p. 57); while McInnes (1987) described how "Blue Quills has attempted to develop, in students, parents, employees and Indian communities, a sense of ownership and pride of the Centre" (p. 141).

The limited research studies conducted on Native leadership strongly indicated that the task of leadership in locally controlled schools is highly complex. The challenge was heightened by problems such as the absence of leadership models and management framework, inadequate resourcing, and ambiguity in the meaning of control. However, a greater challenge to the question of leadership in locally controlled education systems, according to Armstrong (1987), is to satisfy the requirements of traditional education as a natural process: "The answers for quality education lie outside the parameters of the process of schooling. . . . We need to see the danger in separating the learning of skills from traditional indigenous philosophies" (p. 19). Coburn (1985; cited in Jules, 1988) pursued this theme: "The answers must come from [within] we who understand the problem best; we who have been there; we, the Indian educators" (p. 5).

The researcher then explored the role of Native Indian leadership in educational change.

Leadership of Educational Change

The literature which described the story of educational change in the Alexander community emphasised an influence of strong Native leadership.

The Alexander (Kipohtakaw) First Nations Community is located about 20 miles northwest of Edmonton, Alberta. Approximately 800 Cree Indian people reside in the community. The Cree word Kipohtakaw means 'bushed in, enclosed or protected by trees,' and reflects a community shared image of nurturing and protective support held by the community.

In 1964 a small group of Alexander (Kipohtakaw) community members who held a vision for the education of their children established a committee to participate in decisions being made by the federal and provincial governments about the education of their children (N.I.B., 1988b). The committee lacked government recognition, their powers were limited, and initially their efforts achieved little more than a reactionary voice to government initiatives. However, according to Weick (1984), the opportunity merely to react to government initiatives represented progress, because "small wins stir up settings, which means that each subsequent attempt at another win occurs in a different context" (p. 43).

Significantly, the quest for change had emerged from a few individual community members who perceived a need for a different education system. In exploring the meaning of change, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) contended that "it is at the individual level that change does or does not occur" (p. 45).

By 1977 a deepening community awareness of the major education problems on the reserve encouraged committee and wider community members

to consider the broader option of intervention. Their vision was clearly expressed in the words of one community member recorded at that time: "We knew in our hearts even if we couldn't put it into words that the task that lay before us was to begin a complete community healing process" (Kipohtakaw Education Centre, 1987c).

According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), the expressed meaning of this vision for change was significant because "the key to understanding the worth of particular changes or to achieving desired changes concerns the problem of meaning" (p. 4).

Extensive time and preparation for change enabled the development of a community climate which was conducive to individual change, acceptance of new ideas, and reframing of meanings and priorities. As conceptualised by Barth (1991), "Thinking otherwise does not necessarily mean thinking big rather than small about good education. It means thinking differently" (p. 124).

As the need to change the quality of education and their lives became more meaningful, the community members' value-based vision strengthened. Their philosophy for successful leadership was epitomised in the following quotation from the Kipohtakaw Education Centre (1990): "The eagle has become a symbol of pride, strength and vision. . . . Our community is reemerging, taking its rightful place in the Canadian mosaic" (p. 1).

> Elders and other community members felt that the time had come for the people of Alexander (Kipohtakaw) to shoulder the responsibility for the education of its children and youth. It was time to find or create an education program and process that would release the potential of both the children and the community. (p. 2)

A significant change in the political climate and increasing local need at that time continued to inspire community leaders to mobilize people and resources towards the implementation of desired change. Their former token participatory involvement in education discussions with the government had accelerated to a questioning of the quality and relevance of current programs and a challenge to the government for educational reform: "The philosophy set forth at the Alexander Band community recognises that higher-order competencies form the basis of becoming truly competent in society" (N.I.B., 1988b, p. 55). By 1980 the community was fully committed to the development of a successful community education program; an Education Improvement Project was launched, and the first Band Education Co-ordinator was hired (Kipohtakaw Education Centre, 1987a, p. 5). "We have discovered in ourselves the strength necessary to change the quality of our lives. The pathway to 'Determining Our Own Destiny' is focused in a locally controlled and community involved education process" (p. 1).

The educational reasons for the determination to change were based on a community-identified need for quality of education as a prerequisite to quality of life. The planned change was multidimensional and complex. It required multilevel innovations which were linked to external (political) processes and internal (entrepreneurial) goals (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

At this time schooling was provided by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the reserve for Grades 1-6 students, and secondary-aged students were bussed to a nearby provincial school. However, the federal and provincial education programs were not designed

or implemented in a manner which reflected traditional belief and had little relevance to community realities.

The combination of factors which necessitated change at this time was concomitant with Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) thesis that a number of major external and internal forces over a period of time create pressures for change. The community was dissatisfied with the education services provided. The provincial system was not catering adequately for the needs of Native students, and alternate programs were non-existent. The government was encouraging decentralisation of educational programs. The community envisaged a program designed to reflect local values which would assist in developing the academic and self-concept of students and parents. Consistent with Fullan and Stiegelbauer's theory, the community "had perceived a discrepancy between educational values and outcomes affecting themselves or others in whom they had an interest" (p. 17).

According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), change is political, and a multiplicity of reasons other than educational merit influence decisions to change. The two major stakeholders, that is, the community and the government, presented different agendas for the change process. The government was committed to the policy of devolution "to innovate without risking the cost of real change" (p. 28) largely to appease community and political pressures. Conversely, the community was committed to the pursuit of the questions central to the purpose of change, such as "What is education for? What kind of human beings and what kind of society do we want to produce?" (p. 23). The first-order change in policy adopted by the government to improve the quality of

what existed did not equate with the second-order change in practice--"new goals, structures, and roles" envisaged by the community.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) described a second-order change as a change that affects organisational culture and structure, while Handy (1989) referred to change which significantly changes a society as discontinuous change. The major educational change initiated by this community fits Handy's contention that "individuals and groups at all levels can accomplish major reform if they consider the content and the process of change and take action" (p. 16). The what of change (better education for their children) and the how of change (community designed, implemented, and evaluated programs) referred to by Fullan and Stiegelbauer were extensively explored by the committee in relation to the needs and priorities expressed by the entire community.

As part of the initiation of change process, a needs-assessment survey in the form of a questionnaire was circulated to all homes in the community. The needs and priorities expressed by local respondents confirmed the concerns long felt by the community that the traditional Canadian schooling provided on the reserve was not meeting the cultural and educational needs of its children. In fact, the findings presented the following deep-rooted and extensive education problems, as recorded by Kipohtakaw (1987a):

- Only one student had graduated from high school in the previous 15 years.
- The drop-out rate for children in the provincial schools was 100%.
- The school attendance rate at the reserve school was below 50%.
- The students were at least three grade levels behind children in other parts of the province.
- Spiritual, emotional, and economic depression were becoming the norm.
- A large number of the students were found to have visual perceptual problems.

- Most children over the age of 12 years were abusing alcohol, drugs, or both.
- School vandalism was costing the government about $2,400 a year.
- Only one Native person worked in the school. (p. 3)

The community stakeholders had participated in the planning process and were well prepared for the change that would transfer control of education to their leadership. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) affirmed that stakeholders at the local level may most effectively manage the meaning of multiple change--and most successfully prioritise and integrate the change process. The restructuring of roles and goals at the practitioner level was an example of Elmore's (1988) contention that, "instead of concentrating on how people behave in received roles within a fixed structure, we should begin to create the roles and structures that support and encourage the educational practices that we want" (p. 5).

In 1979 a school committee which consisted of seven elected community members worked in consultation with the community and defined a philosophy for an educational program which would resolve current problems and reflect cultural realities:

> We believe that by providing our children with an education equal to or better than that which is offered by the provincial schools, one which at the same time supports and reinforces our Cree heritage, we are assuring that our children have the skills, information, and traditions which will allow them to make wise choices about their future and become competent citizens of any society. (Kipohtakaw Education Centre, 1990, p. 4)

With this objective in mind, the committee prepared a strategic plan which included a detailed submission for government funding. Subsequently, the education committee, with full community support, met with government authorities to state their intention of creating a community education system which reflected their Native philosophy and

realities. The plan was endorsed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and funding was allocated for a five-year period. The committee accepted the limited-term funding because educational change was desperately needed, and the government funding enabled the program implementation process to begin. This was a "small win" to the initiators of the change process because, according to Weick (1984), "Once a small win has been accomplished, forces are set in motion that favour another small win" (p. 43).

The community persisted with its vision of designing and controlling a local education system which truly reflected Native culture, although limited funding prevented longer term planning and provision for on-site infrastructure was not guaranteed.

This is an example of the obscurity often associated with change and predicted by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991): "The meaning of change will rarely be clear at the outset, and ambivalence will pervade the transition" (p. 31). Schon (1971; cited in Fullan & Stiegelbauer) developed the same theme: "All real change involves passing through the zones of uncertainty" (p. 31).

However, the benefits of the change were clearly evident. The change from a federally imposed education system to a locally controlled system offered the benefits of a long-overdue process of community learning, renewal, and development. At the same time it provided a model to all Native Indian peoples to pursue determination of their own destinies, and it offered the government the benefit of trialling the decentralization of education to local control.

Central to the change process was the challenge of major program innovation. According to the Kipohtakaw Education Centre (1987b), in

their effort to identify a program model which reflected the community-based philosophy, the committee visited other parts of Canada and the United States to observe the implementation of programs designed to cater for the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. Following approximately two years of research, the school committee recorded a decision to adopt the ANISA program on the basis of adaptability potential and compatibility with Cree philosophy and culture. The committee's investigation of mechanisms assisted its selection of an innovation model which was compatible with local needs. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) commented on the value of this approach: "The presence or absence of mechanisms to address the ongoing problems of meaning--at the beginning and as people try out new ideas--is crucial for success" (p. 45). The name of the program selected, ANISA, a Bahai term,

> means a flowering, a healthful growing. It is as rich in symbolism as the Cree culture itself. It embodies the concepts of beauty, grace, nurturing, shelter and growth. The model teaches the relatedness of all the universe and an individual's vital part in it, similar to our elders. (Kipohtakaw Education Centre, 1987, p. 4)

This alternative program model for Native students offered a universal package which incorporated philosophy, methodology, and content and had effectively catered for educationally disadvantaged students in the United States of America. As reported by the Kipohtakaw Education Centre (1987b), community leaders were impressed with the ANISA program model because it emphasized the principles of their own philosophy--the <u>how</u> and not the <u>what</u> of learning, seeing, listening, hearing, thinking, feeling, and striving.

The decision to proceed with the adoption of program change was based on the assessment of three locally determined factors. Readiness (capacity and need) for educational change was clearly established. The program had the potential to be relevant to the needs of Native students and provided flexibility for adaptation if required (practicality and need). Resources provided by the federal government were readily available (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). The process of initiation of planned change had successfully mobilized people and resources towards the implementation of a community-based education-program change.

As reported by the N.I.B. (1988b):

> In September 1981 the Chief and Council of the Alexander (Kipohtakaw) community presented the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development with a resolution to assume jurisdiction over the local Day School as of July 15, 1982. On April 20, 1982, the Council passed a resolution which transferred the education committee to school board status, thereby giving it authority over all education matters. (pp. 53-54)

The Kipohtakaw community had achieved what was described by Pauls (1984) as "the opportunity to determine and direct their own education that would fulfill their socio-cultural aspirations and local needs" (p. 31).

In 1982, some 18 years after the first meeting of visionary community leaders in 1964, the Kipohtakaw Education Centre was established, and approximately 100 children were enrolled in nursery, kindergarten, and Grades 1-4 classes and commenced educational programs directed by the Alexander (Kipohtakaw) School Board (Kipohtakaw Education Centre, 1987a, p. 2). The long process of planning to manage their own school became a reality, and "it quickly became apparent to the school board that education could and would become the entry point for large-scale community development" (Kipohtakaw Education Centre,

1987a, p. 2). This meaning of the change expressed by the community was an example of Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) opinion that "change must be viewed in relation to the particular values, goals and outcomes it serves" (p. 8).

Historically, the community had experienced the subjective reality of coping with educational change. The many imposed first-order changes had reproduced the same acculturation. In contrast, this second-order change initiated in the community and based on shared understandings grew from within. It reflected community-based values in an education system which, according to the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990), promoted (1) a community-client focus, (2) shared staff-community learning, (3) centralized administration services, and (4) collaborative decision making. The meaning of this multidimensional change was embedded in what Glickman (1990) referred to as "school empowerment, the decentralization of educational decision making, school-based staff development, and site-based management" (p. 68).

The program implementation process offered change in the three dimensions of practice recommended by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991): (1) new and revised materials, (2) new approaches to teaching, and (3) the alteration of beliefs. Program developers reviewed tests recommended by Alberta Education and supplemented selected resources designed to cater for individual needs of students. The new wholistic educational program offered a new process-oriented approach to teaching which replaced the familiar product-oriented approach. The report, contained in the Kipohtakaw Education Centre's (1987c) Determining Our Own Destiny: Phase II, indicated some specific outcomes of the change.

Firstly, it presented a challenge to teachers in their evaluation of students and led to the adoption of the strategy of individualized student programming to ensure sequential teaching-learning processes. Secondly, the adoption of a process-oriented curriculum challenged many of the traditional beliefs held by people in regard to program delivery, teaching methodology, content, and evaluation of educational programs. Historically, the community had associated a process-program philosophy with highly affluent, white, upper-class areas where students were educationally advantaged. Thirdly, the new program influenced a cognitive shift for this community towards a new meaning of education and the acceptance of responsibility for its own educational destiny.

An important strength of program implementation in this community was that it involved all members of the community. This encouraged the development of collaborative work cultures, the sharing of successful practices, and staff cohesion during the change implementation phase. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) reflected on the value of "educational change as a learning experience for the adults (teachers, administrators, parents) as well as for children" (p. 66).

The implementation of the new program also highlighted the positive interactive process between the external (government and ANISA staff), local community support, and the characteristics of the change process. Evolutionary planning during the process improved the fit between the lack of clarity, staff expectations, and community politics. As stated by Louis and Miles (1990; cited in Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991), "When it comes to implementation, power sharing is crucial" (p. 83).

The factor which influenced the maintenance of this program most significantly was the lack of funding, which eroded program support

structures. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) suggested that a lack of ability to maintain funding is often a deterrent to continuation. As more Indian bands assumed control of their education programs, the funding to this community was dramatically decreased, and the adopted ANISA program was a high-cost program which could not be funded at the local level. Huberman and Miles (1984; cited in Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) stressed that "continuation or institutionalization of innovations depends on whether or not the change gets embedded or built into the structure (through policy, budget, timetable, etc.)" (p. 89).

To view in isolation the locally perceived problems associated with the implementation of the new program may well raise questions regarding the effectiveness of this change. However, the multidimensional second-order educational change was embedded in a philosophy which reflected strong community-shared vision and values. These ensured the development of longer-term policy and practice in a shared learning environment. According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) theory, the evolutionary process of implementation in second-order change creates further policy. "This process stimulates and prods people to change through incremental and decremental fits and starts on the way to institutionalizing the change in question" (p. 92).

The ANISA model provided a framework for an alternate program needed at the time and was successfully utilized by the school board to implement planned change. It provided a firm foundation for the evolution of a wholistic approach to education which incorporates Native values and the Alberta curriculum in an activity-based program. This outcome is an example of Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) theory that effective implementation therefore is a process of ongoing clarification

and learning. As conceptualised by Glickman (1990), "The more an empowered school improves, the more apparent it is that there is more to be improved" (p. 70).

The Kipohtakaw Education Centre's (1987b) A First Nation Experience in Striving for Quality Education reported a number of "notable achievements" associated with the educational change. A tangible outcome of the change was the improvement in school attendance, reflected in recent figures which pointed to an average post-local-control attendance rate of 90% to 95%. The children attending the school were viewed by 90% of the community surveyed as being happy and achieving well at school. There were increased parental involvement in the program and strong community support. Community members now constituted a major part of the school work force as qualified teachers and teacher aides. A healthy, natural environment designed to enhance learning was providing social and cultural support. These significant outcomes affirmed Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) contention that "improvement of practice is thus a continuous process of renewal" (p. 90).

In reflecting on its community's achievement, the Kipohtakaw Education Centre's (1987a) Determining Our Own Destiny stated:

> Every phase of the development and administration of the program has been a learning experience for those involved. We have a sense of accomplishment here at Alexander but no one knows better than we how far there is to go: it is on this basis that a five-year plan has been developed and continues to be updated. (p. 10)

The educational change process initiated in this community may be described as a mutually adaptive, evolutionary change strategy. Strong community-centred leadership of this process developed a plan (linear)

which they adapted to the environment (adaptive) and integrated with cultural values and beliefs (interpretive) to facilitate second-order change. This second-order change altered the education structure, goals, and roles of the organisation and transformed a federally imposed education system into a locally designed and controlled, parent-involved education centre.

The leadership, responsible for initiating, implementing, and continuing this change, wisely balanced choice value with communitarian value to transcend organizational structure and culture. This process mirrored the reality of the assumptions put forward by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) that sustained change takes time, that effective implementation is a process of continuous learning, and that organizational culture can be changed through multilevel innovations.

Handy (1989) maintained that this type of multidimensional change to an alternate approach to education--and to life itself--as experienced by this community, is a practical means of achieving discontinuous change "to untrodden paths and new ways of looking at things" (p. 9).

According to the Kipohtakaw Education Centre (1987a), during the initial three-year period of community control the school expanded to accommodate K-7 grades student enrolment. A high school was established in 1988, as it was believed that substantial gain could be made in terms of future graduation rates.

In 1990 three Grade 12 students graduated from the program and are currently attending post-secondary institutions throughout the province. Research began in 1989 on the development of a community college at the Alexander reserve to cater for life-long learning needs.

At the present time the construction of a new school is in the final stages of completion, and staff and students from both the on-site elementary and junior-senior high school are looking forward to continuing their education together in a modern, spacious facility.

In the final analysis, the people of Alexander convincingly demonstrated through an effective leadership of planned change that Indian control of Indian education can be very successful and can provide vital answers to the growing needs and concerns of other education systems. This was reflected in the conviction symbolically expressed by the community:

> The Eagle has returned to our lives, our school and our community. With common sense, unity and determination we will pursue our goals and we will continue to believe in our dreams and hopes for the future.
>
> Our dream for children everywhere is that they too will discover the strength and vision that will make it possible for them to determine their own destiny. (Kipohtakaw Education Centre, 1987a, p. 10)

Chapter III

Research Methodology

The study was designed to focus on the collection of multiple sources of data to enable the researcher to develop an understanding and to generate findings to research questions. The principle that guided the evolution of the study as the naturalistic inquiry progressed was "to have the problem emerge from observation, from data . . . , in other words, by grounded means" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 89), "because grounded theory is more likely to be responsive to contextual values and not merely to investigator values" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41).

The purpose of the study was to explore leadership practices through a discovery of human behaviour as it existed in the unique environment of one community-controlled education centre.

As contended by Owens (1982):

> One cannot understand human behaviour without understanding the framework within which the individuals, under study interpret their environment, and that this, in turn, can best be understood through understanding their thoughts, feelings, values, perceptions and their actions. (p. 5)

The intent of the researcher was to create a vignette to describe the physical, social, and individual human environments as they emerged during the day-to-day evolution of events and transmissions.

According to Merriam (1988), "One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional and ever changing. It is not a single fixed phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed or measured" (p. 167).

Mode of Inquiry

The mode of inquiry employed in this study can best be described as an on-site descriptive case study investigated from the perspective of a naturalistic-inquiry qualitative mode of research. As stated by Owens (1982):

> Qualitative inquiry needs to understand human behavior and human experience from the actor's own frame of reference, not the frame of reference of the investigator. Thus, naturalistic inquiry seeks to illuminate social realities, human perceptions and organizational realities untainted by the intrusion of formal measurement procedures. (p. 4)

The case study methodology was employed to help the researcher absorb the situational and interactive forces which created the real-life events in this community education centre. As observed by Merriam (1988):

> Case study has in fact been differentiated by other research designs by what Cronbach (1975, p. 123) calls "interpretation in context." By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity ('the case') this approach aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. (p. 10)

In a similar vein, Yin (1984) observed that "case study is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context" (p. 25).

Descriptive is defined by Merriam (1988) as "a rich 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 11). It was described by Guba and Lincoln (1981) to mean "interpreting the meaning of . . . demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep seated attitudes and notions, and the like" (p. 119). According to Wilson (1979), the description is usually qualitative: "Case studies use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images and analyze situations. . . . They present

documentation of events, quotes and artifacts" (p. 448). The naturalistic paradigm assisted the researcher to gain an insight to the perceptions of informants' views on leadership practices and thereby develop an understanding of the meanings of their realities.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 37) defined five established principles of the naturalistic paradigm:

- Realities are multiple, constructed, and wholistic.
- Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
- Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible.
- All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
- Inquiry is value bound.

Data Collection

As suggested by Merriam (1988), "Qualitative case studies rely heavily on qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents" (p. 68).

Data were collected by observing, listening, and reflecting; by conducting semi-structured to open-ended interviews with those persons who 'appeared' as central figures in the leadership network; and by undertaking a review of policy and procedures manuals, school publications, and government documents. Day-to-day observations and events, including summaries of informal conversations, were recorded in a journal for review and reflection purposes. As observed by Patton (1980):

> Qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviours; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts, and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories, . . . raw data from the empirical world, . . . data which provide depth and detail. (p. 22)

Patton claimed that this could be obtained only "by getting close physically and psychologically to the phenomenon under study" (p. 43). In a similar vein, Loftland (1975; cited in Patton) argued that

> the commitment to get close, to be factual, descriptive and quotive, constitutes a significant commitment to represent the participants in their own terms. . . . A major methodological consequence of these commitments is that the qualitative study of people, in situ, is a process of discovery. (pp. 36-37)

Data were collected during the period of November 5, 1991, to January 25, 1992. During that time the researcher spent eight full days at the community education centre. The first two-day visits were devoted to meeting staff and members of the community, hour-by-hour observation, and generally blending into the fabric of the environment. Kidder (1981; cited in Merriam, 1988) stated: "Observation is a research tool when it (1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to controls on validity and reliability" (p. 88). Time was seemingly infinite as the researcher listened to and informally talked to staff, visited the various sections of the centre, answered children's questions, and visited classrooms. Patton (1980) pointed out that the "observer/observed is an interdependent relationship in which the researcher too may be changed as a result of the interaction. Indeed, it is this interdependence that gives naturalistic inquiry its perspective" (p. 192).

To discover the realities and values of people as they existed in the physical and social environment, the researcher allocated maximum time to develop a climate of trust and confidence. Gay (1987) claimed that "by establishing rapport and a trust relationship, the interviewer can often obtain data that subjects would not give on a questionnaire" (p. 203).

As staff absorbed the purpose of the researcher's presence and informal discussions continued, the researcher speculated on leadership patterns in the organization. With some verification by the Director and the principal, potential interviewees were identified. The researcher met personally with each potential interviewee, fully discussed the purpose of the study, and invited his or her participation. Each prospective interviewee was guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Eight interviews were conducted, and six were tape recorded with the consent of the individual interviewee. Each interview lasted 60 to 100 minutes. The other two interviewees consented to a tape recording, but practicality intervened. One staff member was interviewed many times during the drive to and from Edmonton, and the Director was rescheduled for interview several times due to off-site leadership commitments.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), the interview also provides for "continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the inquirer, allowing him to redirect, probe and summarize" (p. 187). An interview schedule (Appendix 1) was used as a guide only, as the researcher preferred to encourage each interviewee to tell his or her story from a personal and sequential perspective. Not all the questions on the schedule were asked of all interviewees, and some questions were

reframed by the researcher to fit a particular perspective being described.

Method of Data Analysis

All tapes were transcribed in full and read and re-read many times. The transcriptions were given to each interviewee to read with a personal letter which thanked him/her for participating and reiterated an assurance of confidentiality (Appendix 2). Some of the interviewees edited the transcription, but this involved mainly sentence-reconstruction, corrections, and/or additional information. The substantive content was not altered. The researcher then roughly sorted the data collected from the journal notes of observations and the policy and publication documents into categories aligned to the research questions. Particular themes did not naturally emerge at that time, but, rather, general categories aligned to the research questions. In analysing the transcripts of interviews, the researcher initially highlighted themes, selected and marked potential quotations, and then literally cut and pasted them into general categories. At first the large picture seemed to resist division and the researcher's perception of clear, thematic classification. The complexity of the question of leadership seemed to be so interconnected that it was difficult initially to isolate discrete topics.

About this time the researcher experienced the challenge of completing what Berg (1989) described as "a complicated jigsaw puzzle" (p. 111). However, as the general categories were reviewed, a synthesis unfolded during the coding process. The researcher's patience was pleasantly rewarded as the puzzle pieces were blended into the contour

of the complete picture. At that time the researcher sought the assistance of a colleague to examine the data collected in relation to the findings, and, apart from minor clarification, concurrence with data classification was established.

Credibility of Data

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure data trustworthiness: "It is incumbent upon the researcher to find out if the inquirer's analysis of the data is believable." Trustworthiness of a naturalistic study may be judged by "credibility for truth value, fittingness for applicability, audibility for consistency and confirmability for neutrality" (p. 104).

A number of techniques were utilized during the study to ensure trustworthiness so that the reader could believe what he/she was reading and to ensure that "the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). The four criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1981) for establishing trustworthiness will be discussed, with examples of strategies utilized to ensure compliance.

To ensure credibility or truth value of the findings, the researcher visited the education centre many times, on different days of the week, and observed and talked to staff in many different settings. Considerable time was spent in establishing rapport and developing a climate of trust and confidence, to encourage spontaneity and candidness in prospective respondents. This procedure also provided ample opportunity for staff to assess the truth of the researcher's intentions and purpose.

The loosely structured interviews were conducted in a relaxed setting and were unrestricted and unhurried. They provided exhaustive detail. The researcher frequently paraphrased comments--and sometimes asked, "Did you mean to say . . . ?" Interviewees had the opportunity to read and edit transcripts, to add or delete information as required.

In addition, the researcher adopted the technique of triangulation to improve credibility by verifying information collected from different sources. According to Denzin (1970), "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies" (p. 308). Much of the information acquired in an interview was verified by information presented in other interviews and during informal conversation or observation. The review and analysis, Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990), and school publications confirmed much of the data acquired through interview and observation methods.

To further establish credibility and confirmability, the researcher shared an outline of the findings analysed from the data with a senior officer at the education centre. Quotations from the taped interviews and journal entries of quotations recorded during informal conversations were used extensively in the thick description to enable the reader to interpret meaning, elicit images, and acquire insight into the "thoughts, feelings, values, perceptions and actions" (Owens, 1982, p. 5) of the respondents as they unveiled their realities.

The original data were retained in permanent record form, including the original audiotapes, computer disc files, and printed transcripts. The notes of the analysis of the Alexander School Board Policy and

Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990) and local publications, together with handwritten journal notes of observations, have been securely stored.

The design of this case study enabled the researcher to step inside a unique world of realities, focus on the participants in the real-life events in the setting, and thereby discover meanings of leadership as they unfolded in this community education centre.

The inquiry was enriched by the researcher's access to multiple sources of data and the reciprocal high level of trust maintained between the researcher and the participants in the study.

Chapter IV

The Setting

It was a chilly November morning. Dawn was barely breaking as the long, straight road unfolded like a ribbon across the starkness of the farmers' fields. A hill "bushed in" emerged in the distance with little sign of habitation. An abrupt turn to the right unmasked in silhouette high on a hill a cluster of irregular-shaped buildings seemingly floating in the glimmer of a sea of snow.

As the first rays of sunrise unveiled the splendour of a new day, a community stirred. Instantaneously, lights like beacons in the buildings beckoned response. Simultaneously, it seemed the stillness was stifled by a wave of purposeful activity.

Staff arrived, and, with heavily laden bags of books and other resources for the day, intrepidly shuffled across the icy car park, greeting one another in the crispness of the morning air. Soon they parted and, proceeding in several different ways, directed their footsteps towards respective classrooms and offices. Cars drew up, and children and parents alighted and walked into the buildings together. A bus arrived, and children, safely shepherded off the bus, skated across the icy footpaths into the warmth of the building. Beautiful husky dogs jumped playfully about the children until, almost dissuaded, they distanced their active indulgence.

A large metal plaque centred on the external wall of the entrance clearly identified the building as

Kipohtakaw

Education Centre

Opened: Sept. 3, 1982

Dedicated to

Chief Fred Arcand, S.R.

1916-1976

Whose Vision and Wisdom

Has Helped Others to

MAKE THIS EDUCATION

CENTRE POSSIBLE

Immediately inside the building, a sign reminded all who entered to remove their footwear. An assortment of unimaginable shapes, sizes, and colours, advertising market favourites in boots, decorated each side of the small entrance lobby. Double doors led into a hall and revealed a large office area which appeared to be a busy focal point for formal and informal clarification and direction on the day's activities for parents, staff, and children who called by. A smaller office next to the main office provided facilities for resource and other visiting personnel. At the end of the entrance hall a small staff room seemed not to comfortably accommodate everyone, but welcomed all who entered. A large table in the centre of the room and a medley of chairs satisfied a multifaceted demand for lunch area, socialisation centre, and work space. Native and non-Native staff congregated in this friendly place to exchange greetings, socialise, and informally clarify activities in launching the new school day. The interaction between staff was

vibrant, and an atmosphere of caring and sharing prevailed. Custodians busily checked facilities, and parental inquiry was courteously attended to. A severely, profoundly handicapped student was assisted into the supportive sanctuary of the staff room and cared for.

The sound of the school bell officially heralded the formal beginning of the school day. Children moved excitedly towards classrooms on either side of the shining hallways decked with colourful displays of students' work. A staff member searched for matches. The guide led the curious observer from the hallway through double doors into centimetres of snow across to a classroom accommodated in one of four trailers surrounding the main building. The transportable classroom was bright and inviting. Colourful displays of children's artifacts symbolised happy learning discoveries. The researcher experienced the meaning of education. A younger group of children sat in a circle, waiting reverently as the visitors were invited to participate in the simple sweetgrass ceremony. Following the ceremony, a Native teacher explained the meaning of this traditional ritual:

> It is part of the traditional practice we do every day--again, it's a cultural one . . . Because culture is viewed very highly and practiced very strongly in the community, every morning we do a spiritual cleansing, which is the burning of sage and sweetgrass and fungus, if it is available. It's a purifying process which we do with the children to purify their minds and their thoughts and any actions. It's basically a whole-soul cleansing that we do every day, and the children are very responsive to it, and they practice it at home. They are very culturally based, and we try to reinforce and promote that in the school as well.

It was a deeply moving experience as the richness of a culture was observed and to some degree absorbed in a way that meaningfully conveyed the vision expressed in "Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision for Our Future."

Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision for Our Future

> In the knowledge of my People, the Elders and the children are as one in the Circle of Life. The Elders are the holders of knowledge, the Teachers of our culture, songs, heritage and survival. The children, our future, represent the carriers of this knowledge that never grows old. Through community guidance First Nations balance the wisdom of our ancestors and the challenges of the future.
>
> John B. Thomas

On leaving this trailer classroom, the guide and principal spoke with conviction of the cultural core of this community school. She went on to say: "The community is the essence of this program. Whatever happens in the community affects the program. It is really important to be sensitive to the community's pulse." In the very functional space of the main office in this building, the principal spoke modestly of her role as "just one of the many facilitators" in this community-controlled education system. A highly experienced teacher across a diversity of educational fields, she had worked as a teacher in the elementary school for a number of years prior to appointment to her current leadership position. Her empathy with local cultural values, a high energy level, and a deep commitment to the community inspired her leadership aspirations. The principal spoke proudly of her staff team and realistically defined the strengths and challenges of the day-to-day program, emphasising that operations must reflect "what is best for the children and what is best for the community." She firmly believed that role modelling is really important. "Honesty is really important . . . the way we live . . . walk the talk . . . so to speak."

The elementary school had a current enrolment of 131 students, which includes children enrolled in a full-time kindergarten program and children enrolled in a half-time kindergarten program. All the children

enrolled at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre live in the community. There were 14 staff members, including eight K-6 classroom teachers, a librarian, a resource teacher, two special-needs assistants, a Cree teacher, and a teacher of religion. Each class was staffed by a fully certificated Native or non-Native teacher and a Native teacher assistant from the community. In the words of the principal, "The teacher assistants are a really important reciprocal bridge between the community and the school, and this really helps to create a secure learning environment for the children." An on-site training course was mandatory for all community members appointed to teacher assistant positions. The appearance of a teacher with a student at the door temporarily interrupted the discussion as the principal left to attend to the matter.

A few minutes later a senior member of the leadership team entered the office and warmly welcomed the researcher to the Kipohtakaw Education Centre. The Executive Director was a member of the community, and her active involvement in community programs spanned many years. She was initially appointed to the position of teacher assistant in 1971, when DIAND first allocated positions to all federally controlled schools. As a community member, the Executive Director was deeply committed to the local advancement of educational opportunity and achievement. In defining her meaning of <u>local control</u>, the Executive Director stated:

> As far as I am concerned, it is another approach to education. . . . The opportunity to focus on what we feel is important culturally to our children, using the Alberta curriculum as a guide. It is important that our children are well prepared to succeed in the wider world's society.

The Executive Director believed that the wholistic approach to learning which had evolved from the ANISA program model and catered for the emotional, spiritual, and physical needs of the children helped to "get children feeling good about themselves, . . . and this stimulates mental growth."

Role modelling was viewed as a very important part of the program--"to try and help individual children and people as much as possible to feel good about themselves." In commenting on the nature of her leadership role, the Director stated: "We like to get away from hierarchy. . . . The bottom line is 'What is the best for the children?' We are here to serve the children and to make sure that they get the level of education they deserve."

The Director described the role of the community-elected Chief and Council as a key leadership function. "The Chief and Council are ultimately responsible for all outcomes of all community activities. They listen to the community, give direction where it is needed. . . . They understand what will work in the community." As the leader of the Administration Program, the Director was the Chief Executive Officer of the community-elected school board and was held accountable for the total operation of the education system in accordance with the priorities defined in the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990, pp. S1/S2). She was responsible for an administration staff team which included a Special Projects Co-ordinator, a Program Co-ordinator, the elementary and junior-senior high school principals, and a Curriculum Developer. In addition, the Administration Program was supported by a finance clerk, a secretary-

receptionist, and a maintenance, transportation, and custodial team of five support staff.

At this point the sound of the school bell clearly announced a mid-morning recess break. Classrooms echoed activity as the task of dressing up in coats, toques, mitts, and boots became a group focus in preparation for a temporary exit to the playground. Some children remained in the hallways and tracked the observer supposedly unobtrusively until a moment of curiosity and courage compelled them to enter the room and conduct an impromptu interview. Questions often asked by the children were "What is your name?" "Where do you live?" "What is it like there?" "Are you our new principal?" "Are you a new teacher?" The children were very active and friendly and appeared to be happy. They were both eager and confident in approaching and talking to visitors.

The Administration Building was a slightly elevated block of offices situated adjacent to the elementary school buildings. In the front room of the building, a secretary-receptionist attended to enquiries and visitors and provided clerical support to the 12 staff members supporting the Administration Program. A short distance along a hallway past the secretary's desk led the researcher to the office of a recently appointed member of the administration team. The Program Co-ordinator had had six years' experience teaching English at the high school prior to his acceptance of the offer of appointment to a newly created leadership position. In describing the nature of his leadership role, the Program Co-ordinator explained:

> My job involves making sure that the educational program . . . in this school is comparable to the provincial system, to schools off reserve. . . . Actually, I suppose, the school board and my Director would say that my job is to make sure

> that our system is better, to make sure that teachers who come into this school are assisted in understanding the community and the children in the community.

The day-to-day responsibilities of this position included the oversight of the school program, evaluation of teachers, student assessment, and identification and trialling of new courses and curriculum. The Program Co-ordinator believed that leadership comes from "the generation of ideas," which he regarded as particularly fertile in this educational setting because of the blending of cross-cultural values, beliefs, and ideas in a management of shared meanings. In reflecting on the development of the education centre, he stated: "Metaphorically speaking, we are past the conceptual stage now . . . with signs of maturity to a human body. Staff are developing a greater degree of sensitivity regarding readiness for further growth and incremental change." He believed that his years of experience with the community, with staff and students, and his understanding of the community's cultural priorities would enable him to contribute significantly to team building and the ongoing development of the organisation.

Further along the hallway and a turn to the right, the observer was welcomed into the office of a Native member of the Administration Program. Although Native born, the Special Projects Co-ordinator explained that she was not originally from this community but from another band. Following tertiary qualification in Social Welfare, she had worked in various social fields for approximately 16 years. This experience included a period of eight years in this community, six of which were served in the position of Social Services Manager. The

Special Projects Co-ordinator was highly committed to community development and clearly saw her role as a facilitator for the community:

> Once people identify their need and are committed to it, then I become involved. And mainly, I'm just sort of, I guess, a tool or the person that sort of puts all their information together and we go from there. Most people from the community know what they need, but it's the "in between" that needs working on the most.

The in between included researching market options, writing submissions, and negotiating with the Chief and Council and federal and provincial governments for funding. An example of her role responsibility was described in the following way:

> For instance, with the Life Skills and Job Readiness programs, we first listened to community demands, then we put the submissions together, and then the Director and I presented it to the school board for their approval, then we would speak to the Chief and Council and explain the details. Usually, if it is for the betterment of the people, the Chief and Council don't have any problems with it. If the Chief and Council approve it, I prepare a Band Council Resolution stating all the information, and the Chief and Council formally sign approval of it.

A walk down the hill and past the Band Office led to the junior-senior high school, which was temporarily housed in the back rooms of the Alexander Band Office. The leader of the high school component of the Kipohtakaw Education Centre advised that he had accumulated approximately seven years' experience in Indian education. Having spent a number of years as a teacher on another reservation, he had recently accepted the offer of appointment to the high school. The principal's responsibilities were divided between administration functions and teaching duties.

The high school had an enrolment of approximately 50 students in Grades 7-12, and

> we offer what I think is a complete junior high program from Grades 7 to 10, and we have about forty students in that program. We have about twelve students in our Grade 10-12 program, and because of our small numbers of staff and small amount of space, we can't really offer a complete senior high program. Some students therefore are taking correspondence courses or individualised courses based on correspondence courses. This includes one student who is taking Physics 10 and Math 20 under my supervision. However, the situation will ease when we move into the new school in 1992.

The principal spoke enthusiastically of his "highly professional staff team." There were seven professional staff, one full-time counsellor, and a teacher aide. "Things basically run pretty smoothly here. Staff meetings serve as a forum for discussing concerns about students or operational matters, . . . and everybody seems to be pretty happy."

The return to the elementary school later that afternoon was greeted with eventful preparations for the end of the school day. Staff and children were busily engaged in assisting children with their coats, buttons, boots, and toques, and an atmosphere of sharing pervaded. Some parents entered the building to meet their children; cars moved cautiously in and out of the car park as children routinely boarded the bus to go home. Teachers moved in and out of the staff room to classrooms, some working with their TAs in preparation for the next day, others socialising. Staff were friendly, open, and always courteous. Some asked the observer questions about the project; others seemed more interested in the observer's history and welfare. Staff seemed to be highly committed to the goals of the Education Centre, and many spontaneously verbalised respect for the various leaders.

With the sun's last majestic rays dazzling the horizon and darkness descending, the staff began to move towards their homes.

As this day ended, the researcher had captured a glimpse of a culture in action through the observation and experience of "social realities, human perceptions and organizational realities untainted by the intrusion of formal measurement procedures" (Owens, 1982, p. 4).

Chapter V

Leadership of the Educational Program

In assuming control for a locally managed education system, the Alexander Band accepted a responsibility to develop an education system that would educate and train students in this community for many generations to come. They engaged in long-term planning and took care to build on experiences and formalise a system which set strong foundations for student achievement, particularly in fundamental education areas (Alexander School Board, 1990).

The philosophy set forth at Kipohtakaw Education Centre recognised that "higher-order competencies form the basis of becoming truly competent in society" (N.I.B., 1988a, p. 58). This highlighted a community-expressed goal of provision for lifelong learning for the individual child and adult student. In this meaningful educational environment, "our learners will be prepared to enter any society with the gifts of self-discipline, independence, mastery of analytical and critical faculties, and reverence for the world, beauty and wonder" (Alexander School Board, 1990, p. 9).

The following quotation was recorded as the perspective of a Native classroom teacher with approximately nine years' experience in Native education, including six years in this community:

> The philosophy of this school is to provide the best type of education we can to our children at a grassroots level for them to really believe in themselves and to do the best that they can. It's also based on a holistic point of view where we believe that the children develop in four realms: their physical being, their spiritual being, their emotional being, and their mental being. We refer to this as the Medicine Wheel [see Appendix 3], and that is trying to provide an education that can balance the children in those four realms. We really do our best to try and meet the needs of the

> children and of those employed here . . . who are not only educating the children, but sharing whatever we have and providing cooperation so that it's almost to the point of nurturing of a maternal home.

The educational objectives specified by the School Board recognised that the development of the psychomotor, perceptual, conceptual, volitional and affective competence occurs through the students' interaction within the total environment within and around them.

> The School Board strongly recognises that the integration of Cree cultural perspectives, the values and the knowledge within the overall curriculum, is both attainable and desirable. The School Board strongly supports the involvement of the School Board, the staff, Elders in the community, and wider community members in social activities as a way of increasing morale, unifying community support, and as a positive force in helping develop community responsibility within students and staff. (Alexander School Board, 1990, p. 11)

Planning

Within the curriculum guidelines and objectives framed by the School Board, planning of the educational program was a shared responsibility. This was emphasised by a co-ordinator:

> The planning of the educational program is very much a collaborative process involving the principals of both schools, the Executive Director, the Curriculum Co-ordinator, and the Program Co-ordinator. Staff meetings are used for program development, and 1991, this year, a Curriculum Developer was appointed. The main aim is to bridge the gap between school and community to really build in regular connections and later to expand to perhaps a cultural camp, learning environments outside the school, which it seems is much more comfortable for Elders to participate in.

A short walk across to the Administration Building located a Curriculum Co-ordinator who had worked for five years in Indian education prior to her recent appointment to this position. Her primary task as co-ordinator was to define and develop a school-based curriculum

which reflected Native culture, skills, and values, for implementation in conjunction with the Alberta curriculum. The Alberta curriculum had been unitised to assist teachers in the preparation of programs. While there was an awareness of some inadequacies of the provincial curriculum, it was considered essential to use this curriculum as a base to ensure sequence and continuity of learning through elementary and junior-senior high school in preparation for entrance to college and/or university. Furthermore, the Curriculum Co-ordinator stated, "We are trying to build in cultural aspects such as kinship, traditional role, and Native history."

> Right now I am developing curriculum . . . mainly towards social studies in the Native studies area, where we're going to put together a book on Alexander, the history of Alexander and its people. We're getting our information from Elders. We're taping videos of Elders telling stories and talking about different things. We are working on little children's books . . . starting at the day-care level in Cree and in English.

This program development was designed to enhance significantly the cultural component of the educational program and provide a meaningful local emphasis which reflected the tradition and culture of the community.

> When the Native studies book on Alexander is done, at the end of each chapter we're going to put in activities and unit plans for teachers throughout the grades, so we'll have a base of some things to use from their own community to teach the kids about. So if somebody needs some information on government, there will be a section in the book about government from their own community. Or if they need some information on, say, music or dance, there'd also be information there. Or on housing, family lifestyle, family structure, there'll be information about this community in that book.

The Curriculum Developer believed that it was important that new programs emerge from the community, "not from outside sources; a lot of

successful learning is shared: a lot of good feelings and learning in the ways that they know how, learning the values that they deem necessary for survival." According to the Curriculum Co-ordinator, much of the curriculum development occurred through a staff contribution of good ideas: "The individual people, whether it be the Director or a TA, if they come up with an idea, they bring it forth and they're listened to. . . . Everyone's ideas are listened to, and things get done that way; changes occur." When introducing or adapting new programs, the Curriculum Developer believed that it was important to have whole-staff involvement in shared planning; otherwise, it "doesn't work."

> I think different people at different levels make different kinds of decisions, so in the staff meetings there are a lot of decisions made that directly concern the children, such as a new program that's coming in. Because the teachers and the TAs, the staff, have to teach it, they make the decision whether they can do it or not. Once the decision is shared, then everybody wants to do things, so my job consists of a lot of other people helping and just putting the little pieces together.

Examples of the shared staff planning and decision making were the adoption for implementation of Project Charlie, a self-esteem-raising program, and the Chemical Awareness program. "It's pretty well a circle where everybody does have a say." This included members of the community, as suggested by the Special Projects Co-ordinator. "A parent may say . . . , 'My child needs this particular kind of study.'" Such a request would be directed to the appropriate facilitator for staff discussion and recommendation to the Operations Administration Team. The role of the students in program planning was also considered to be important. This was emphasised from the perspective of a member of the high school staff team, who stated:

> If I were setting up a certain kind of program or something specific for the students, I think I would definitely, probably first, even, talk to a number of the students about it and see if they thought it was something that would be helpful to them, because if it's something that I think would be good, if they don't think it would be helpful, then that's just what I see; it has to be what they feel. So I think probably first it would be the students, and then present the idea to _____ and _____.

The perception held and expressed by a number of staff members that program planning involved a process of staff collaboration was aptly summarised by a teacher:

> Whatever the request may be, if it affects other people within the staff, then certainly it's considered as a whole staff, and usually there are a couple of people on staff that do have the same ideas, so then it's just reinforced, and then it is usually addressed and adopted or referred. The key people that are needed at that point are what we refer to as the Administration Team. There is . . . a program researcher, who researches and checks out the feasibility of programs that are available out there and how to obtain them; an overall director; and then . . . the principals and the Program Co-ordinator; then, the School Board, which consists of six community-elected [representatives] people; plus a representative from the Chief and Council meet with [redacted] Admin. Team with all the information laid out on the table; and from there, decisions are made.

Implementation

The educational program at Kipohtakaw Education Centre was implemented in accordance with the overall curriculum goals specified by the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990, pp. 11-12).

1. The pre-school curriculum should include emphasis on early perceptual, gross psychomotor and nutritional screening and development, language acquisition development (such as sharing, group interaction and co-operation, manners, self-respect, and respect of the rights of

others), Native language, investigation of the natural environment, and cultural experiences.

2. The early-primary curriculum (Grades K-3) should include emphasis on language acquisition, vocabulary building, art, music, drama, movement education, perceptual and fine-motor development, beginning math and science, reading preparation, social-skill building, Native language development, the investigation of the natural environment, and cultural experiences.

3. Primary curriculum (Grades 4 to 6) should include emphasis on reading, math, science, spelling, writing, language skills, social studies, art, music, drama, physical education, the beginning of cooking and nutrition, beginning community service, Native language, health, cultural experiences, and investigation of the natural environment.

4. The junior high school curriculum (Grades 7 to 9) will include emphasis on math, science, language arts, social studies, and physical education, and will introduce optional subjects such as art, Native culture, Cree language, industrial arts, computer literacy, food studies, and outdoor education.

5. The senior high curriculum (Grades 10 to 12) will include emphasis on math, sciences, English, and social studies, allowing students to follow either a general or an advanced route in these subject areas; as well as emphasising the required topics of physical education, Native studies, personal development, and career and life management; and will introduce optional subjects such as art, Cree language, building construction, computer literacy, food studies, law, and psychology.

Each teacher was responsible for the implementation of an individually planned program which reflected the curriculum goals specified by the School Board. Class programs were monitored and evaluated at the school level. Staff meetings at the respective schools provided a forum for sharing ideas for program implementation. Principals, the Program Co-ordinator, and the Curriculum Developer readily responded to program queries and needs with advice, support, and the identification and location of relevant resources. Advisors from the province were available to assist when required.

The language of instruction was English, and this was fluently spoken by students at all elementary and secondary levels. The Native language Cree was taught in the elementary school. As expressed by a co-ordinator, "A Cree class was established to ensure that the heritage language is preserved for all elementary students because it is English and not Cree that is spoken in most of the homes. You can't have culture without the language," he concluded. A class teacher expressed a belief that it was important to give a sense of pride and respect to the Native children through their Cree language because that is an enrichment of their culture.

The sharing of teaching strengths was utilised wherever possible. An example provided by the co-ordinator was, "A teacher, say, with a science background, may take another class for science while the other teacher would maybe take music for her, that sort of thing." A high priority in program implementation was to ensure that students acquired a strong foundation in basic skills, so

> we haven't been able to free up teachers to provide a more specialised program in, for example, the arts or physical education or computers. However, . . . in terms of computers, we have three or four people with a considerable amount of

> knowledge in that area, and also with a deep interest in working with Native people, so that's great from my point of view as a co-ordinator.

In looking ahead to relocation in the new school building, a number of staff felt that computer laboratories which catered for elementary and high school students and specialisation in some core areas would be desirable options to the current lack of provision for specialised areas.

> It is going to make it easier for staff and easier for the students, and more enjoyable, and I think it'll be a lift, just a nice facility. This is very makeshift here. Science equipment, things like that, we don't have it, and I think they'll have more hands-on stuff. Even the science experiments, the labs that are there, it'll be more interesting.

Although the high school was physically separated from the elementary school at that time, according to one teacher there was some interaction between K-12 students and teachers through program implementation:

> The gym is situated behind the elementary school, so our high school students go to the gym every day, and there is interaction between all age levels that way. We have elementary students coming down to use the industrial arts facilities, and, again, that provides an opportunity for interaction between students.

Another staff member expressed her feelings in the following way:

> But we're fragmented because the junior high is down there, and we're having to share the facilities between two physically separated schools. It's hard because these junior high students have got to come up here to use our gym and our library. They have a mini makeshift library provided for them down there. Considering the elementary school is physically separated from the junior and senior high, we still are able to have cohesiveness. It will be good to be back together in one big group, though. It will be good to work with everybody again.

The promotion of the protection of student welfare activities was identified as a community-shared priority. According to the Alexander

School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990), "Students are the first concern of the school and must receive the primary attention of the Board and all staff members. In pursuing this primary goal, it is imperative that the welfare of the individual student be kept paramount" (p. 83). The development and reinforcement of student self-esteem were considered high priorities as a focus of the program-implementation process. The objective outlined in the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual sought to "enhance the self-image of each student through helping him or her to feel respected and worthy through a learning environment which provides positive encouragement through frequent success" (p. 83).

The planning and implementation of the educational program was designed to promote shared values. According to the Kipohtakaw A First Nation Experience in Striving for Quality Education (1987a) evaluation publication, "The main traditional values being taught are caring, sharing, honesty and determination. By organizing work experience in the community, these values become an integral part of the child's experience" (p. 10).

As one teacher reported, "There are a lot of circle-type activities, some of which are basically verbal in nature, where the children will sit down and talk about each other, the good things they see that make each other feel good." A qualified social worker was employed as a counsellor and worked mainly with high school students, Grade 6 students, and families. During many years of experience in the community, she had developed a high level of trust and respect with students and families. In describing her role, she stated:

> The focus is basically on helping them to get through what they're going through, to be able to get through high school and on to post-secondary education-- . . . university; . . . but it's almost like if these kids don't resolve some of their personal issues, we won't have to worry about career counselling . . . because they are not going to get there. It's really important for teachers to be able to work with problems; . . . to be aware of whatever kinds of problems a child may be having; . . . to recognize the indicators of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse; . . . to know how to bring those things out, where to go with the problem, and what to do. The Chemical Awareness training program has helped staff to help students deal with these issues. It is amazing how some of these kids are even able to be in school and concentrate for two hours a day with some of these things that they are dealing with. So my major task is to support students. . . . Teachers are able to handle the career counselling.

The Kipohtakaw Education Centre policy and operational guidelines recognised a need to cater for students who were disinterested or unable to pursue academic paths. A co-ordinator stated:

> I was employed to coordinate a Stay-in-School Program, and that's a program that assists and enhances the education program at the junior and high school levels. What that particular program has done thus far is to provide programs like trades, like mechanics . . . and industrial arts. We did that last year, plus we introduced an industrial arts program component on a full-time basis this year, this past fall. . . . Now we're getting into sewing. . . . We have tutoring. . . . We have a cultural component. . . . Because there were ten to twelve students that were interested in drumming, we now have a drum group. We also have a few dollars to place students in job placements, and that's been quite good. This past term from February to June we employed three students, and this fall we have employed eight students.

Many of the community members believed that on-site training of students to take on community employment responsibilities was a high priority in terms of local control. This was now being addressed at the school level, as reported by a team co-ordinator:

> With some of our students we have to start looking at more trades, because not all our students are ready, they're not all university material, so we also have to look at another stream, and I think that's now changing. We recognize that there is another stream that we have to introduce here, more in a trade kind of program for our students.

In the co-ordination of program implementation the Administration Team exercises a major role, as described by one respondent:

> We have this Admin. Team which consists of the Director, principals, and the Program Co-ordinator. We try to meet on Mondays. We get together and compare notes, and I guess it more or less serves to let each person know what is going on in the other's area so that there are no problems. We co-ordinate facilities, attend to the placement of students, sometimes address student behaviour, . . . look at equipment and material needs, consider budget priorities . . . and any special program needs. If someone wanted to develop or implement a new course, that would be discussed, then it may be referred to the School Board, . . . then maybe to the province for approval.

It became apparent, however, that the emergence of major changes would activate a contingency plan which invited wider debate at the local level. It was the opinion of one co-ordinator that,

> if we had to make drastic changes, . . . if somewhere between the School Board and the administration it was decided that the changes which needed to be made were substantial, I think the mandate here is to have parent committees involved. We would maybe even have a community meeting. . . . The consultative process would start with the community. There is a strong desire that this program be a community-designed, a community-backed program.

This indicated a clearly communicated provision for the implementation of the educational program to be monitored through community and individual accountability at all levels of the organization.

Evaluation

It was apparent that it was very important to the Alexander community that the educational program content and standards at Kipohtakaw Education Centre be "on stream, at least, with the provincial systems" and, if possible, "better than other systems." The reason for this, according to a co-ordinator, was that "there is such a need by most Native people of Alexander and almost every reserve for students to

get into that education system that is accepted by the economic world and come back to the community and do things here." Parental interest in student performance compared to provincial standards was high, because parents want to be assured that Kipohtakaw Education Centre would adequately prepare them as prospective college and university entrants. Therefore, the School Board was highly protective of the effectiveness of a student evaluation program, essentially to ensure that Kipohtakaw Education Centre was doing "what is best for students." At that time there was no prescriptive school-based assessment program. Teachers prepared a classroom teacher's test and reported to parents on student performance. The Kipohtakaw Newsletter to Parents 1991-92 stated that

> Parent conferences will be held twice during the school year, on November 21 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m., November 22 from 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon, and on March 26 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m., March 27 from 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon. Every attempt should be made by parents to attend. Home visits may be made to those parents who don't attend conferences. . . . Report cards for Elementary and Junior High students will be sent home three times annually. (p. 8)

It was reported by one respondent that "evaluation for junior-senior high school students is tied to the provincial system, with department exams and standardised testing." Classes were very small at the senior-secondary level, and at this time Kipohtakaw Education Centre did not have students taking the matriculation stream, so that meant that there were no prospective university entrants. The Canadian Achievement Test, which is used in most Canadian schools, was administered to K-12 Alexander community school students. According to staff who administered the test in their own classrooms, "The Canadian Achievement Test seems to be well researched and prepared. The scoring and

subsequent reporting procedures are particularly good." A co-ordinator responsible for the acquisition of test materials and the testing program arrangements described the program in the following way:

> The test encompasses elementary and secondary grade levels. It goes from the levels that are 1-6, so that's near the end of Grade 1. After students have gone through . . . two thirds of the year in Grade 1, it would be recommended that you give the first test, which is Level 12, . . . and then there are tests that would test students at the Grade 12 level.

When completed, the tests were forwarded to the Psychometrics Test Centre, which is an agency for the Canadian Achievement Test Program located at the University of Alberta. In due course the Kipohtakaw Education Centre received a printout on each individual student and a class printout. In addition, the Psychometrics Test Centre supplied materials for placement in the individual student's cumulative record file and a report to parents on individual student performance. The School Board intended to use the results to evaluate program effectiveness and student performance. However, in further consideration of how the test results were used, one respondent suggested: "Should the results ever come back that the majority of our students are doing poorly, . . . there may be some restructuring of the system. . . . Or it could disrupt some of our cultural programs."

> [However,] I would like to use the test results as justification for funding for special needs in a proposal to Indian Affairs, such as "We need more funding to do some computer-assisted instruction to help our students improve on basic skills; we need more resources in terms of science and social studies."

A further advantage of participation in the Canadian Achievement Test Program was that the test centre provided a series of lessons on the concepts tested, in the Classroom-Management Guide Resource Book.

> The test results will be used using that guide to help teachers prepare their students better to understand, say, regrouping in mathematics or to help them develop some of the skills needed to understand vocabulary in the area of language. We can get very specific in some of these things, because the tests will give us some very specific scores.

This could significantly influence the planning of the class program, particularly in the area of content- and curriculum-area time allocations. "In fact, it will help to realistically determine our instructional priorities."

The challenge clearly expressed by respondents was to acquire a balance between the development of a current program which truly reflected cultural values and the achievement of comparable standards in the Canadian Achievement Test Program. In the words of one educational leader, the real mission at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre was

> to offer a quality education to the students in a manner that will enhance their lifestyle, both in a Native Cree culture manner as well as in an academic, technical world or the White world, our non-Native world. This would ensure that they acquire the skills to survive both on and off the reserve, so that, when it comes time to make career choices or for their future, they <u>do</u> have a choice, that their kind of future doesn't pick them, but they pick it.

Chapter VI

Leadership of Resources Management

Personnel: Selection and Recruitment of Staff

The educational leaders in the Alexander community strongly believed that quality of staff was a prerequisite to the quality of education. The Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990) stated:

> An outstanding educational program in the school is dependent upon the employment and retention of the best qualified professional personnel. Of all the controllable ingredients which are essential for a good learning program, teachers are the most essential. . . . Retention of excellent classroom teachers takes primacy in the expenditure of administrative energies in order to achieve the goals of the Alexander School System. (p. 70)

The priority given to the recruitment of suitable staff was reflected in the following clearly defined goals:

> The goals of the Board's personnel program shall include the following:
> 1. To develop and implement those strategies and procedures for personnel recruitment, screening, and selection which will result in employing the best available candidate, i.e., those with the highest capabilities, strongest commitment to quality education and the greatest probability of implementing the community's learning program;
> 2. To develop general deployment strategy for the greatest contribution to the learning program, and to utilize it as the primary basis for determining staff assignments;
> 3. To develop a climate [in] which optimum staff performance, morale and satisfaction are produced;
> 4. To provide positive programs of staff development to contribute both to the learning program and to each staff member's career development aspirations;
> 5. To provide for a genuine team approach to education, including staff involvement in planning, decision making and evaluation;
> 6. To provide attractive compensation and benefits as well as other provisions for staff welfare;
> 7. To develop and utilize for personnel evaluation positive processes which contribute to the improvement of both staff capabilities and the learning program;

> 8. To act on behalf of the Board, when necessary, in regard to matters not empowered to the Executive Director, which arise between Board meetings; such actions are to be submitted for ratification to the Board at its next meeting. (p. 70)

While teacher recruitment was the ultimate responsibility of the Board and the Executive Director, the selection procedure was a collaborative process which included the active participation of staff at all levels of the organisation. Fundamental to the Director's understanding and attitude to selection criteria were the beliefs, qualities, and experience that prospective staff offered:

> We look for people who have worked in Native communities, people who are aware of Native values and culture, people who have thought about their own philosophy of education and their own personal development. Adaptability is important, particularly for non-Native applicants, but even Native applicants need to be able to adapt because of the differences in culture between the communities. Alcohol and drug abuse are not tolerated, because staff working here must be role models for our children.

A longer-term community aspiration was to have an education system which was managed by the community for the community. Therefore, the Board encouraged community members to pursue a career in education. However, the practice of employing professional personnel without regard to race or creed was adopted. As suggested by one co-ordinator:

> Otherwise you may lose some of the perspective on something. . . . The Native people I have worked with here who have held administrative positions have always said that there is value in understanding the way that other people do things. So I think it is realised that although they would love to see Native people completely running the system, they do at the same time realise that people from different backgrounds of experience can offer different perspectives and ideas.

In a similar vein, the blend of cultures was regarded by one staff member to be extremely important: "This is not a provincially transplanted education system and never will or can be, so we really do

need to have some people with Native backgrounds." One of the perceptions held by a counsellor for teachers intending to work in the community was that "they come with an attitude where they are willing to learn something." In a similar vein, the specific personal qualities required in staff recruited to the community were perceived to be important by a number of staff members and were aptly summarised by a Native-born teacher: "The qualities needed are an open mind, good interpersonal relations, varied background, and a high level of commitment."

Historically, the Director advised, positions were advertised throughout the province, but the cost of the recruitment exercise and the relocation of successful applicants proved to be very expensive. "At the present time we advertise vacancies in the Edmonton Journal, and unless we have difficulty in identifying suitable staff that way, we do not usually advertise throughout the province." A Native teacher recalled the story of her recruitment accordingly:

> It's a very interesting process because the advertisements go out in the newspapers across the province, and I applied for a position at Alexander. . . . A team of four or five people from the community arrived to conduct interviews. At that point they did some interviewing, some initial screening, and then another set of screening, so it's quite a filtered process of choosing people to come and work for Alexander. They had an informal night where they met applicants on an informal basis. . . . They showed a film about the community. It was more or less like "This is what we want. Can you help us to help our children? What strengths do you have, and what can you add to our program?" I was shortlisted, so they arranged for me to visit the community to see the school and meet the community.

The selection procedure followed at the school level was thorough and intensive, as recalled by another member of staff, who described her experience of recruitment to the Kipohtakaw Education Centre:

> First of all, you go through a meeting with probably a couple of Board members, principal, and Director. It's a formal-meeting interview. Then you are screened from there, and if they want you there, then you come into the school. You spend a day in the classroom observing the children teaching lessons, . . . maybe go into two or three classrooms, depending on what grade the vacancy is in. A teacher is observing you to see how well you interact with the children, what your teaching skills are. . . . Sometimes the principal observes too. At the end of the school day you are invited to attend a whole-staff meeting. All the teaching staff and TAs are there to meet the candidate, and anybody can ask the candidate questions. Then the candidate will leave the meeting and the staff discusses him or her, . . . what they liked and didn't like. The teacher and/or principal who observed the candidate in the classroom(s) will discuss their impressions of the candidate, suitability or otherwise, . . . how the children reacted to them, their teaching performance. Then the staff will decide whether they want to have this person on staff or not, . . . because they initially are the people who have to work side by side with this person. This is more or less the final decision, because the candidate already has the acceptance of the Board.

Successful applicants were hired to undertake a specific assignment in accordance with a job description but could later request transfer to other assignments (Alexander School Board, 1990). Contracts were signed for a period of one year. The Director believed that this had advantages for both parties because the Kipohtakaw Education Centre was funded for a one-year period and either party had the right to accept or reject renewal of the contract after that time.

The recruitment of paraprofessional personnel was the responsibility of the Board and the Executive Director, and priority consideration for selection was given to suitable community members who could effectively reinforce the cultural link with the community.

Staff Development/Training

For many years the educational leadership in this community has promoted wholistic personal growth and development as a very high priority. In the words of a counsellor:

> With the basic feeling that if the workers and staff aren't healthy, they can't do much for the children. There is a real focus on all of us dealing with our own issues, . . . and, fortunately, our administration is really open to providing personal development programs.

This was emphasised in the Personnel Committee - Terms of Reference Statement No. 7, which specified the following objective: "Foster personal growth and development in both the individuals and the team" (Alexander School Board, 1990, p. 32).

It was reported by one respondent that approximately two years ago a therapeutic team from the Chemical Awareness Institute conducted a training session at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre. The workshop included simulation exercises and lectures to promote awareness in specialised areas such as family dynamics, co-dependency, and "enabling" strategies. All members of the Kipohtakaw Education Centre participated, and staff from other community departments, including Social Services, NADAP, and the Health Centre, were invited to attend. "We found that it was so powerful and necessary. As a result of the training session I noticed last year a lot of changes in teachers' attitudes, particularly towards students with problems." The initial training program was followed with five training sessions which catered for staff mobility and reinforced previous workshop-experience learning.

The leaders at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre highly regarded team building as a vital link to the development of a healthy organisational culture. To reinforce team building priorities, staff retreats were

programmed twice a year. A three-day retreat was held prior to the commencement of each school year, followed by a two-day retreat in mid-term. All members of the school community attended and participated. In describing the importance of the retreat, the Director emphasised that

> it is a vital event which involves all staff members and School Board members. In September the retreat program emphasis is on team building, which sets a tone for a team approach and fosters a relaxed co-operative commencement for the new school term.

The retreat program provided an opportunity for new staff members to become acquainted with the organisational philosophy and goals, meet staff, get to know one another, and just spend time together in a relaxed atmosphere. In the words of one co-ordinator:

> The staff go away to a place . . . somewhere near the mountains usually. Often we have a speaker come in and talk about either the culture, the way of life of Native people, or teaching methods that are genuinely student centred, genuinely based on having the students work together to do things. In general, we explore pathways for the teachers to be able to actually let the students generate what goes on in class.

According to one respondent, "We learn from one another, we learn from the community. . . . The children are all our teachers." This sensitivity to the learning environment was spontaneously expressed by a number of staff members: "I've learned a lot. I don't know if I can say I've learned how to think differently, because I think I always was like this." Another teacher expressed her feelings this way: "Always needing to keep in touch with where we are, where we are going, where we are at, what we have done, . . . learning from the past, doing in the present, combining the two to make decisions for the future"; or, as concluded by one staff member, "It's like people are growing with the program." As reflected by a staff member: "I've learned more here than

I've ever learned in my life. I've found a sense of spirituality here that I've never had before." A number of staff members commented on the locally provided, school-based personal and professional development programs as "a very real incentive for the development and maintenance of a healthy staff."

In accordance with the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual, the Alexander School Board (1990) actively encouraged the professional development of teachers and sought

> 4. To provide positive programs of staff development to contribute both to the learning program and to each staff member's career development aspirations; and
> 5. To provide for a genuine team approach to education including staff development in planning, decision making and evaluation. (p. 70)

Staff were encouraged to attend and participate in off-site in-service and professional development courses offered by the province or other agencies. A co-ordinator identified relevant in-service programs and nominated staff to attend and provide feedback. However, it was primarily the responsibility of the individual staff member to identify in-service programs and make their own arrangements to attend, subject to management approval for their release. According to one respondent:

> Usually the Education Centre will arrange to relieve staff of their duties and pay their way in to whatever workshop or training they want to go to, . . . providing it's only a few days. . . . One program that a group of us were funded to attend, . . . although it did require us giving up our holidays, was an in-depth language arts workshop.

All Native teacher aides participated in a two-year training program implemented on site by Grant MacEwan College. The program was

negotiated as a result of a survey in which community members indicated that they wanted trained staff.

A Special Projects Co-ordinator explained:

> We had a Liaison Officer meet with all the parents in the community to identify the things that they liked about the school, the things that they thought needed working on, so some of the things, like more training for teacher aides, came through that way. . . . And that's how we got the program.

At the time of recording, 11 TAs were participating in the on-site training program two days each week and were expected to complete their training in 1993.

Although the junior-senior high school was physically separated from the elementary school, combined professional development days were organised "so that one total staff may learn together and share the experience of professional development."

Staff Management

Teacher evaluation. Historically, the responsibility of evaluating teachers at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre was managed by personnel attached to DIAND. However, this task was devolved to the Education Centre in 1991. According to one teacher, "We had a chance to have some input into how teacher evaluation would be managed at the local level, . . . and it was openly discussed with staff." A co-ordinator responsible for the evaluation of teachers believed that an external evaluator had the potential to heighten anxiety and make the process far less personal than it need be. "On-site evaluation allows teachers to get to know their evaluator, and that adds a level of closeness to the process that brings evaluation to a far more efficient level."

In particular, the evaluation program was considered to be vital to teachers who were new to the system. Although the community encouraged stability of staff, teacher mobility was significantly high. Many of the new teachers had not worked previously in Native situations. Therefore, maximum help and support were offered to assist teachers to adapt and stay on for a period of time. The role of the teacher evaluator was described accordingly:

> I visit classrooms, consult with teachers in a supportive manner, see what the programs are, whether or not they need help, provide help if it is needed. There is a necessity for me to complete an Education Centre Observation Report form following my visits to classrooms. (See Appendix 4)

Although school-based teacher evaluation was a recent initiative at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre, the Co-ordinator believed that its strength lay in a two-way process where teachers could assess their own performance and seek the opinion of the evaluator. This was further explained by one teacher: "For example, can you just come in and see what's happening when I introduce a lesson?" or "Does my voice project throughout the class?" Observations and interviewees provided the following positive feedback regarding the teacher-evaluation process:

> He has visited everybody's class two or three times. . . . There is a format sheet which is fairly standard. . . . It's more or less like any evaluation that you would see in a public school district, . . . maybe a little more open ended in some places.

Another teacher perceived the role of the evaluator in this way: "His position this year is to evaluate professional staff, . . . the teachers, . . . and check to see if they are within baseline of the curriculum, . . . and if their methodology is appropriate, . . . generally highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the professional

staff." A further comment highlighted the teacher-evaluation program from a perspective of collaborative learning:

> Working together with teachers, . . . and he's broken down the barrier of "I am coming to see you." It's like, "What can we learn from one another? That's a good idea. . . . Will you share it with _____?" Again, it's in a relaxed, co-operative manner.

The role of the evaluator was considered critical in terms of the maintenance of a quality education program, and decisions were made in the best interests of the children. This was emphasised in the following comment:

> He does observations and writes reports. . . . If a teacher is not doing well, then he gives support, suggestions, and tries to help this teacher. . . . They're helped along the way. But if a teacher is found totally unsuitable, . . . then within the contract guidelines they are given notice and let go for a just cause.

According to the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990), a recommendation to the Board to terminate a teacher on contract activated a clearly defined set of procedures which include the following staged process:

1. Role specifications shall be clearly spelled out in problem areas;
2. The Executive Director or his/her designate shall have evaluated teachers;
3. Assistance shall be offered and changes attempted early so that sufficient time is provided for the teacher to implement recommendations;
4. Further evaluation by the same evaluator shall take place to determine reaction to the recommendations;
5. Written reports of each evaluation or visit shall be submitted to the teacher;
6. A frank discussion shall take place between the teacher and the Executive Director;
7. Alternative courses of action shall be considered which may include transfers and external evaluation;
8. Opportunity shall be provided for the teacher to appear before the Board;
9. All reports, and such other evidence that may exist, should be presented at a regular Board meeting well in advance of the termination notice;

10. The Board will decide carefully whether to terminate the contract or the designation;
11. The written notice of termination must be sent and received by the teacher thirty days in advance of a vacation period;
12. The notice of termination shall state clearly the reasons for termination or designation and they shall be those reasons which can be supported by evidence;
13. Legal advice should be obtained as to the wording of the notice of termination and if the termination is appealed, a lawyer should be retained to present the Board's argument. (p. 74)

Any employee had the right to appeal the application of policies and administrative decisions affecting him/her, and "the employee is assured "freedom from restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal in presenting an appeal with respect to a personal grievance" (p. 79). Grievances were handled expeditiously in accordance with the following procedures defined in the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990):

1. FIRST LEVEL: Any complainant who has a grievance shall discuss it first with his or her immediate supervisor.
2. SECOND LEVEL: If as a result of the informal discussion, the matter is not resolved, the grievant shall initiate a grievance in writing to his/her immediate supervisor within five school days, giving the full details of the grievance. The principal or other immediate supervisor shall communicate his/her decision to the grievant in writing within three days of the receipt of the written grievance.
3. THIRD LEVEL: If the grievance remains unresolved, the grievant no later than five school days after receipt of the above decision may appeal it to the Executive Director. The appeal must be made in writing and must give details as to why the decision was unsatisfactory. The Executive Director shall give his/her decision in writing to the grievant within 10 school days.
4. FOURTH LEVEL: If the grievance is not resolved, the grievant may no later than five days after receipt of the Executive Director's decision request a review by the Board. The request shall be made in writing through the Executive Director, who shall attach all papers relating to the grievance. The Board, or a committee thereof, shall review the grievance and shall, at the option of the Board, hold a hearing with the grievant and render a decision in writing within 45 days of receipt of the appeal. (p. 79)

Finance

As described by one co-ordinator, accountability for the management of finance was the ultimate responsibility of the Chief and Council:

> A lot of people make decisions, but the Chief and Council are the ones with the authority to sign our funding agreement. It's called an Alternative Funding Arrangement, and the agreement is signed by the Regional Director of Indian Affairs and our Chief and Council. . . . They authorise that these dollars will be spent on the provision of services for their community.

The Alternate Funding Arrangement provided the opportunity for Band Councils to manage all local programs and services specified in the DIAND Operational Plan Framework. This included education, social development, capital facilities, and community services, lands and trusts, First Nations management, economic development, and self-government. According to N.I.B. (1988c), Band Councils which had demonstrated sound management practices for approximately three years and had a financial management plan in place could negotiate with DIAND to adopt the Alternate Funding Arrangement. Although this arrangement did not provide additional funding, it facilitated the management of funding in accordance with locally identified priorities. The Alternative Funding Arrangement consisted of multiyear agreements with an annual appropriation of funding which may be utilised by community leaders for community services without the restrictions of the former contribution funding method. It was clearly emphasised in Clause 1.8 of the AFA contractual agreement that "Council shall have discretion in the development and delivery of policies and priorities in respect to services and programs" (p. 2). In commenting on the management of finance, one co-ordinator said:

> There are a lot of decisions being made by the people, like the administrator, the School Board, the staff, and the principals--they determine the particular financial needs of the school. The decisions are made there, the administrative decisions, but the funding comes from the Chief and Council.

The Alexander School Board (1990) was responsible for the annual education budget. Policy Statement 6100 in the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual stated: "The Board shall receive, review and approve the annual budget of the school" (p. 116).

> The School Board, in collaboration with the administration, has established procedures for the administration and control over all funds administered by the Education Centre, and the procedures published in the Policy and Procedures Handbook clearly define the level of delegation to various bodies and delineate those functions retained by the School Board. (p. 116)

As trustee of all funds allocated for use in this locally controlled education,

> the Board recognises that prudent management of funds supports the infrastructure of the whole school program, so they encourage advance planning through the best possible budget procedures, explore practical and legal sources of the dollar income, and guide the expenditure of funds so as to achieve the greatest education returns. (p. 116)

It was emphasised by a director that, "with resources, . . . we need to establish hard priorities; . . . we often need to make the difficult decision between materials and equipment . . . or people to work with our children." Members of staff were encouraged to be involved in the preparation of the annual budget. "They may provide written recommendations to the Executive Director or the Principal(s) towards the end of each year, outlining immediate or projected classroom needs." Once the budget was allocated, staff were involved in determining educational needs and priorities within the annual allocation. To assist with the management of finance, the Board

authorised a Finance Committee which consisted of two Board members and the Executive Director. The Finance Committee adhered to the following terms of reference:

1. Meet as need arises to review matters of financial nature.
2. Review financial statements each month and make recommendation for budget reallocations as necessary.
3. Make recommendations re policies of financial nature.
4. Assist in preparation of annual budget for presentation to Council and Department of Indian Affairs.
5. Recommend departmental budget allocations after budget has been finalized.
6. Review and recommend all one-item purchases over the amount of $1,500.
7. Review and recommend to the Board for approval all annual audits, auditors, and financial statements. (Alexander School Board, 1990, p. 31)

The Finance Committee was involved in reviewing the budget annually for presentation to the Board for approval and in making any adjustments prior to submission to the Band Council and the Department of Indian Affairs. When the budget was approved, the Finance Committee reviewed the departmental allocations and made recommendations to the Board.

The Board was responsible for ensuring that proposed expenditures within each financial year complied with allocations and conditions approved by the Board for each department. All proposed expenditures within a financial year were submitted to the Board for budget approval.

The Board had the responsibility and the authority to set financial policies from time to time with respect to the operation of the Education Centre. The Board authorised all new accounts, and no credit accounts were opened or operated without prior authority of the Board. The School Board received, reviewed, and approved monthly financial statements, which were prepared by the Executive Director and the Finance Officer.

The Board delegated authorised funding to the Executive Director, who then delegated authorised limits to Program Directors and principals, who delegated authorised limits to staff. One co-ordinator commented: "I work within a budget allocation, . . . and I need to keep track of the limits." Funding for the school's component of the Education Centre was in one budget, and day-to-day priorities were established by the principals, "more or less by negotiation and some give and take." A regular printout of the budget provided staff co-ordinators with advice on the status of the budget.

Fund-raising activities could be conducted in the school, providing that they were approved by the Executive Director or her delegated authority. Organisers produced a program of proposed activities, demonstrated the need for funds, and submitted a financial statement. Fund-raising activities organised by the staff and/or students usually promoted educational, cultural, and community values.

In accordance with Policy 6140, the School Board was responsible for the preparation of a financial statement of the school system respecting the preceding year. "The Board must review and approve such audits, with the Chair of the Board signing the audited statements. All financial statements shall be made available to the public . . . with the auditor's report as submitted to the Board" (Alexander School Board, 1990, p. 121).

In commenting on the leadership of fiscal management, a co-ordinator clearly summarised the practice: "When we require funding, let's say, we usually have to go through our channels, like the Director, the School Board, and of course the Chief and Council."

Chapter VII

The Nature of the Relationship Between the School Board and the Community Education Centre

The School Board consisted of seven members, including one representative of the Chief and Council, who carries the portfolio for education. "The Board has been entrusted with the responsibility to oversee all operations of the school through a Band Council Resolution #774-12b dated April 20, 1983" (Alexander School Board, 1990, p. 15).

School Board members were elected by the community and served a two-year term of office. Three Board members were elected annually. As observed by one respondent, "Because you have different people on boards, it's very political. Unless you have an incumbent who has been in for a long, long while, you get different perspectives." The Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990) Policy 2020 defined the operational goals for the School Board accordingly:

> The Board shall:
> 1. Set educational goals for the school, keeping in mind the definition of local control;
> 2. Determine the educational and administrative structure most suited to enable teachers to achieve educational goals;
> 3. Ensure that the system is adequately financed now and in future years;
> 4. Keep in close touch with public opinion and with the students regarding what they think the school is doing good and bad;
> 5. Change the system and, if necessary, the goals until most people think it is a good system;
> 6. Determine local policy for the effective operation of the school.
> 7. Delegate those specific and general administrative duties which require delegation to one or more than one employee of the Board;
> 8. When necessary and desirable, visit the school.

The School Board exercised an important role of co-ordination in respect to the operations of the administration and staff teams and in terms of accountability to the Chief and Council. This was emphasised by a senior member of the administration:

> In the School Board itself we have members from the community, as well as a portfolio holder, so he's the connection, and he would inform the Council on a regular basis of what's going on in this program and what the issues are about.

A random survey of staff perceptions of the role of the School Board were recorded in the following observations:

> I think the role of the School Board is to make final decisions from our recommendations, . . . be involved in getting to know their staff, . . . listening and hearing the community, . . . be a kind of liaison between the community and the school, and have everybody working together.
>
> The community can go to the School Board because they elected them.
>
> The School Board will give direction, but that direction will come from those in the community who are willing to come forward and speak.
>
> They are more or less a branch of the Band Council.
>
> They help in the final decision making, where everything is put onto the table. The reason we don't have to take it up any higher than the School Board is that we have a Chief and Council representative who comes with information from Chief and Council regarding decisions that have to be made. He is also the portfolio holder who takes back the information that is discussed at School Board meetings, so that, again, everybody is involved in the decision making.

In defining the specific role responsibilities in the organisation, the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990) stated: "A locally controlled school has two levels of government consisting of the elected representatives who form the school board and an employed administration" (p. vii). Each level of leadership had clearly defined operational guidelines which had to be

adhered to in order to achieve competent and harmonious leadership. According to the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual, the distinction made between policies and procedures was intended to clarify the relationship between the Board and the administration. A policy was defined as "a guide for discretionary action," while a procedure was defined as "a specific instruction based on policy directions." Ideally, the policy was specific in that it conveyed the board's intent in general and left some flexibility to the Executive Director for decision making based on the policy. On the other hand, the procedure prescribed exactly what was to be done and who was going to do it. "The separation of these two roles, . . . policy making . . . and daily operations, should contribute to healthy board-administration relationships" (n.p.).

Generally speaking, policies were made, changed, and abolished only by the School Board, but procedures and regulations were made, changed, and abolished by the appointed administration, providing that the actions were consistent with the overall policy. One staff member described the role of the Board in this way:

> A School Board Chairperson leads the School Board, I guess, and tries to steer it in the direction set down in their policies and their statement of purpose. . . . There's a wide range of things that they have to do. They develop the policies which govern the school in terms of professional staff and discipline of students and building a new school. That is decided by the School Board. . . . Hiring and firing are done at the School Board level too.

Although the policy and procedural boundaries were clearly defined, the lines of communication, action, and decision in day-to-day routines were closely monitored to maintain harmonious relationships. The Board advised parents and members of the wider community of the proper contact

channelling for complaints involving all operational matters such as class instruction, student discipline, or program materials as follows: classroom teacher, principal, Executive Director, and School Board.

The following examples of the procedures adopted for problem solving were presented by two members of staff:

> If, for instance, there is a problem with a teacher's performance, the principal initially attends to it. If it can't be resolved, it is discussed by the administration team, and a recommendation is made. This is presented to the School Board, and then a decision is actioned.

Problems related to students are addressed in a similar manner:

> Usually a problem with a student would be identified by the classroom teacher; this would go through the principal to a school counsellor. The school counsellor would go to the home to discuss that particular problem with the parent, and then it is usually resolved there. If it's not resolved there, then it comes back to the principal, and if it can't be resolved there, it is referred to the Director and/or to the School Board.

It was further explained by a co-ordinator that "larger concerns" would be taken to the School Board for discussion, decision, and appropriate action.

Generally, matters related to operational detail such as student welfare, the educational program, and/or staff concerns were managed by the appropriate level of the school administration staff in consultation with principals and the Executive Director. Major procedural problems were addressed by the Operations Administration Team and, if related to policy recommendations, were submitted to the School Board for decision.

Proposals for the adoption of new policies or recommendations for changes to policy could be submitted for consideration by the Board by any student, community member, or staff member. Program Co-ordinators and principals attended board meetings and reported directly to the

Board. "Usually what they are wanting to hear is a report on how the school is functioning at that particular time." It was reported by one respondent that a committee representative of school board and school administration co-ordinators was established to design a mission statement which reflected the values and objectives of the Kipohtakaw Education Centre. The committee undertook to report back to the Board with a mission statement which will be presented for discussion to a full Board meeting. "We'll look at the policy established by previous Boards from time to time and revise it if necessary."

In 1991 the three members of the Board met with teachers and teachers' assistants to gain feedback on how staff were feeling and what they were thinking about the school. One respondent predicted that this type of dialogue and reflection would have a positive influence on Board decision making in the future,

> so that when they think about changing policies for the school or the classroom, they will consider the impact on teachers more so than has been the case in the past. . . . I think now with this process of getting the concerns, which I think is going to become sort of an annual review process, that there will be more that comes from the school-based perspectives, . . . the ideas, . . . the criticisms which teachers have.

One respondent referred to the role of the School Board related to school discipline procedures: "I know we've been looking at different discipline policies and the need for discipline policies. We did have one meeting last year with a couple of Board members. Nothing was really clearly defined, but they were involved in that."

Perceptions of the role responsibility of Board members to visit classrooms regularly varied from "We see one or two Board members from time to time," and "Occasionally one strolls through the school," to "Often one, two, or three Board members will come in--not all at the

same time, but they'll be in here, and they'll come in and chat for a while, so I have connection." According to one teacher, the Board exercised a pastoral care role:

> The School Board comes into the school whenever they feel like it. They have always tried to relay the response to us that they're not here to spy on us, they're here to see the people that they hired and to see what they do and how they do it. . . . They are very understanding and helpful in governing this school. Certainly they are very effective.

A staff member explained that the School Board members had expressed a willingness to meet with staff at any time:

> If the teachers want to meet with us, let's set up a meeting. All School Board members have indicated that they are ready and willing and able to come in to the school and speak with any staff member at any time. This School Board is visible, highly visible and accessible, . . . a phone call away.

One respondent felt that staff needed to be proactive in inviting the Board to visit classrooms:

> And I think what has to happen too is, we need to pull them in more. I think they probably see themselves as a Board, not so much that they really are needed in the school or that they really could do a lot. I really think that that's something that we have to do, is call them in and say, "We do need you to hear this or see this, and we need you to get involved. I think that we have to take some responsibility for that too.

Section 7000 of the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Handbook (Alexander School Board, 1990) stated:

> Concerning public relations, it is the Alexander School Board's primary purpose to meet the expressed educational needs of the Alexander community in positive, planned, and resourceful manners, always keeping the realization of community control and involvement in mind. The Board believes that one of the paramount responsibilities of the Board of Education is to keep the local community and the general public informed of its actions. Consequently, the local news media representatives shall be welcome to attend all regular, special, and annual meetings of the Board. Further, from time to time the Board may direct the Executive Director to promote special events and achievements. (pp. 126-127)

Band members, parents, and members of the wider community were encouraged to visit the school at any time during the year, including during class instruction time, unless parent-teacher interviews were scheduled.

The Alexander Education Centre School Board and Staff Newsletter, 1991-92, clearly recognised the parent as a very important partner in the education of the child. The Board encouraged parents to maintain that important role in their child's life, particularly related to schooling. The Newsletter urged parents to support their children by parental involvement in the educational program. To assist the achievement of this objective, the Education Centre promoted parent awareness of program details through the circulation of a handbook, a calendar of events, and a monthly newsletter. An open invitation was extended by the School Board to parents and the wider community to visit the school and talk to staff directly. As observed by one staff member, "Most of the children attend regularly, and most seem to try reasonably hard at school, so I believe that there must be a fair amount of reinforcement going on from the homefront."

Chapter VIII

Leadership Practices

What are the leadership practices of this locally controlled community education centre?

Leadership Strengths

For many years this community absorbed the advantages of strong, shared, visionary leadership. In reflecting on the identification of those community members who stand out as leaders, one respondent explained:

> I think it's more of a group. Certainly one person, I think, was instrumental . . . and provided leadership in getting education under the control of this community was one of our former Chiefs, now deceased. Another lady who stands out in my mind is a former Director of the Education Centre. . . . She worked with a group of parents from the community, . . . and some of those people are in leadership positions in the community now.

This evolutionary development of leadership models provided a strong base for community input to decision making. A staff member described this as a real strength of the community education centre program:

> I've always felt that the people here have the ability to express what they need. They also have the usual political tensions that occur in any community, but they're always able to work beyond that. When it comes to a common concern, they come together then. They have a tendency to resolve it. It may not happen as quickly as a lot of people would want, but it happens. They have the ability to resolve concerns that they have, and they come together pretty quickly, . . . and they can work together.

This ability to work together on common concerns was reflected in the story of the community's achievement of a cultural change which resulted in a transfer of control for education to the community. As described by one community leader, "The authority is held by the community because

the community elects the Chief and Council to represent them." The community designated authority to the Chief and Council, and that authority designated authority to other facilitators at leadership levels. "This is the glue that sustains all the parts together." "A lot of people make decisions, but the Chief and Council are the ones that the people have given authority to take on the authority to sign all our agreements."

The feelings and opinions expressed by a number of respondents suggested a quality of leadership at this level. This perception was conveyed in the following observation:

> The Chief and Council are really progressive thinkers. . . . They go to Ottawa and negotiate the community's wishes, and I think it makes a great difference when you have leadership like the Chief and Council . . . being aware of why you're doing what . . . and listening to the community . . . so that they're able to provide good negotiating points to the federal government. . . . I think they are very good leaders.

Members of the School Board were elected by the community, and as described by one respondent:

> I suppose Board members first represent the people of the community, people of their constituency, and have to make sure that those people are being served well by the education system. If they should uncover or be made aware of something that appears to be not serving the people well, then they have to make sure that it is attended to. . . . So they're the overseers of the education system.

The Executive Director delegated authority to members of the Operations Administration Team in accordance with their specific levels of responsibility. The Administration Team met on a regular basis to discuss both emergent school/community needs and longer-term policy:

> Matters . . . generated because of things that each one of us may be doing in particular, or they might come from someone, be it a teacher or teacher assistant, a parent, or a student coming to one of us and talking about something. Then we would take it to the meeting, so at any one time any one of us could be representing different facets.

The influential leadership role of the Administration Team was described by one respondent as "facilitators in senior positions who receive community input and act collaboratively."

> I don't know if they actually drive it [the organisation]. I think that a lot of times they will put things into motion, but I think a lot of times things come from things that are presented to them from different people, from different staff people, or from the students. They're so receptive to saying, "Look, we've got problems with this, we have problems with that. What can we do?" or "We'd like to do this," and they'll do it; they'll go for it. They won't sit back and just kind of leave it. . . . They certainly do act on things, and they're really open to looking at things from parents and NADAP, other areas.

Other perceptions of the leadership role of the Operations Administration Team included: "I think parents will go to them mostly with concerns or things that have happened"; "Our Administration Team I think is excellent. . . . They are pretty strong together"; "They all work as a team and as a unit, and no one person is the overall, how could I say, dictator; it's a shared responsibility in the administration level"; and "Decisions are not made in isolation."

The Executive Director of the Kipohtakaw Education Centre was a member of the community and exercised a dual leadership role which was described by a member of the Administration Team in this way:

> But on that team not only is she the Education Director, but she also represents the community, and wearing two hats at one meeting is sometimes very tough, but that's kind of what she is, so that she is sort of getting ideas from two sides. We will usually comment on things in terms of, "According to this model of education, this is the way things should go," and then the Director will respond to that by saying, "Okay, now, in the community we usually like to do things this way. That model may not fit so well." So it's a collaborative endeavour. . . . The decision-making process here comes from that round table in the Director's office where we sit and make decisions.

The Director was described by a member of the staff team as "someone who really knows what's happening in the school and the community . . . and someone who really supports us. It's really important to have someone like that from the community."

Members of the Operations Administration Team were perceived by staff to be accessible to and highly supportive of staff, as reflected in this comment:

> I'd say for my feelings, I think that the staff, all of us, are pretty fortunate in being able to go to anyone in admin. and be listened to and not be shoved aside when people get pretty busy. That's for me. I can speak for myself, and I think that it is the same for other people too. With anything, if it's a personal problem, if it's something school related, I have no problem going to any of them, knowing that they're there for me; there's strong support for staff. . . . The same with students, I think, and I think the students know that. I think it's really important that the Director is from the community and is in this leadership position.

The Kipohtakaw Education Centre staff group included certificated Native and non-Native teachers and teaching assistants from the community. Staff meetings were held regularly and provided the opportunity for team building. A staff meeting was described by a teacher in the following way:

> But when we have a staff meeting there's at least close to thirty people present, and that's not including everybody. It's keeping everybody in sync and listening and addressing things on the spot. Our Admin. Team is very good at that, and sometimes it's very hard, because our Admin. Team is only made up of four people. It means commitment on them to take the time out, . . . saying "I'm going to do something about it"; it means . . . being co-operative and efficient, and not being evasive.

Personal and professional interaction between staff was described by a number of respondents as being of an informal networking nature:

> Almost everybody here knows what's happening, what I'm doing, because I tell everybody all the time what I'm doing, . . . and they'll come back with ideas. And in the staff room

> _____ will sit there and tell what she's doing. She'll get feedback, get other ideas. Or I'll bump into _____ and talk. It's more or less a migrating, just talking informally, then when we do get formally together, well, that's when bigger decisions, major, that affect everybody, . . . are made.

It was interesting to hear that problem solving is also perceived by staff to be a shared responsibility:

> Most problems are overcome by the problem being set on the table, and all the teachers, teacher assistants, and admin. staff discuss it, find the root of the problem and . . . then discuss the best ways to rectify this problem. . . . It's usually very successful. . . . We're not saying we're a perfect school or anything, but we certainly try our hardest when a situation comes up to deal with it right away. And that's something that I've always found in the time that I've worked here: When a problem has arisen, it's dealt with right away.

A further strength was considered to be the quality of professional staff, as expressed by three members of staff at different levels of the organisation:

> I think the school has strengths in its professional staff.

> I really like it here. I like the people, I like the work. It's challenging; it's really challenging. But what I find is, most of the people who do work here fit in really well, and it's like a good connection with staff.

> I think they have a special kind of understanding; it's something different in a community like this. Even when I came here, I didn't know what would be different; I just knew it would be different. I see all our staff as being real special. I think the people that work here believe in these kids. I think they really believe that they can do something and that they are helping them reach their potential.

According to staff members, the Kipohtakaw Education Centre has developed what was described as a very nurturing climate:

> It's almost like a family, and I think for a lot of the kids it is a family outside the family. I don't think they'd find that in an outside school. The nurturing is happening. . . . It's definitely happening. The caring and . . . trying to get kids motivated. Just everything is geared to the kids' believing in themselves that they can do something really good with their lives, and changes can be made. It's hopeful, I

> think, hopeful for a good future for the community as a whole, and a lot of that is coming from education. . . . They get a lot of personal development work here too, and there's a focus on that, and it's important. . . . I think the changes will start showing as they have relationships of their own.
>
> A co-operating staff, . . . people co-operating together, yet not afraid to voice their opinion, . . . the strength of the people working towards the decisions that are made.

Other staff members perceived the nurturing influence as an extension of the Native way, the Circle, the caring and sharing: "I think that in Native education they need that sort of co-operative base that comes from caring and sharing."

The strong emphasis on culture as an integral part of the educational program encouraged community leadership in the classrooms:

> We do involve the Elders, . . . getting them more active in school program matters, . . . have them talk to our children. . . . We are starting this Culture Camp, and we're getting a lot of community response and volunteers for that. Native teacher assistants are employed in this school because it's a community-based school. . . . We hold the community's interests at heart, and we certainly live by that, . . . invite them in whenever they can come in. . . . It's open; we have an open-door policy here.

The students were perceived to be leaders or role models for other students:

> I think the students that we've got, they have to be our strengths. I think there's a core of students who could be graduates within the next five or six years, if they can maintain their present attitude, but even improve beyond that. It could be infectious and bring other students into that mode as well.

The coalition of leaders described so graphically by the participants themselves was well summarised by this respondent:

> You can have the best qualified specialists anywhere all put together in one program and say, "Okay, make it," but it's the people who make it. To me co-operation is the key, . . . having professional people, and taking into consideration the shared decision-making process. It is not only a school board governing a program; it is everybody. It is the teachers',

> the students' concerns, the parents' concerns, the community as a whole, and the governing body of the community, which is our Chief and Council.

The identification and co-ordination of further education and training programs were recognised as important strengths, particularly in view of longer-term community control aspirations. The aspect of trainings programs was discussed by a co-ordinator:

> We presently have students that have progressed through the Grant MacEwan Social Services program. Now they're in the Bachelor of Social Welfare program. Those people have the understanding that when they have their Bachelor of Social Welfare qualification, they will take over those positions that are presently occupied by people that don't have that kind of training.
>
> And we're starting life skills plus a basic job readiness course beginning this month, which will include twenty-five adults. That's a sixteen-week course. Our funding for that--the job readiness part--comes from Canada Manpower; the other portion comes from Medical Services Branch. Because of our status as Treaty Indians, we have free medical and financial resources there, so we combined funding sources for training programs.

Furthermore, it was hoped that the teacher aide training program, which includes practical work experience with teachers, would encourage teacher assistants to pursue further training and qualification to a Bachelor of Education degree.

Leadership Challenges

A major challenge to leadership in this community was highlighted as that of dealing with issues and attitudes which had evolved as a consequence of historical injustices. One leader expressed the view that "racism has made Native people uneasy about their lives, and that has generated, I think, a sense of tension between different families, . . . different people on the reserve." This belief was reinforced in the views of a staff member:

> A lot of people within the community, . . . they've got a lot of history where they're really connected with one another. They've grown up together; they've been together all their lives. There's a lot of family issues, and you see . . . kind of feuding between different families. A lot of these kids don't even really know where it started, . . . but they are living with it.

It was believed that this directly affected student attitudes and morale. Many staff felt that a lot of responsibility for community problems was placed on the school. It was believed that the school needed greater support from parents to work through inherited problems:

> The families have to take responsibility for their kids' education too. The teachers work so hard, and it's difficult to be here and teaching and not have things reinforced at home. That's a problem. It's a problem, and it comes down to the home situations again where things have to settle down. Again, this is where all the areas have to work together. . . . I think trying to get the whole community involved, . . . really involved, . . . that's the biggest challenge.

In the opinion of one respondent, the attitudes developed as a result of gratuitous acknowledgement of many years of deprivation also presented challenges to community leadership; for example, "'We'll give you Medicare and other benefits.' It has had a really negative effect on a lot of attitudes, and it's hard even with the kids, getting them motivated. It's like not caring." One of the challenges to leadership of Native education expressed by a co-ordinator related to the fact that the concept of a band-controlled school is quite new. Although the need for local control had existed for so long, he believed that the actual management frameworks were still being considered and developed.

The administration of Alexander community services was managed by a coalition of local departments, which included education, housing, health, public works, and social services. Each department was directed by a member of the community. The local leaders of the various

departments exercised a dual leadership responsibility to both the community and to the departmental organisation. Leadership from within was considered to be an extremely sensitive task which required people of strong moral fibre. This fragile balance of responsibilities was described by one respondent: "You don't know where your work ends and your community life starts--work, live, and socialise, . . . no cutoff."

The expectations of family and the wider community very often reflected the cultural priority of sharing. This presented a particular challenge that was articulated by a respondent in the following way:

> If you're going to have an education system on a reserve that puts local people . . . in those sorts of careers, you need to have a lot of community support. . . . There has to be a lot of co-operation, . . . a strong communitarian approach to education.

The complexity of this challenge in a small, isolated community was described in this way:

> Now, that's very difficult to establish, unless the entire outside world built a wall around us, and we were just in here and knew we were going to go nowhere. . . . But that wall's not there, and there is that integration, that influx in, influx out, so you need an awful lot of co-operation within the system, within the community, to make the education system work. And I think people involved in creating local-controlled schools have very astutely noticed that . . . that caring and sharing is something that really has to be part of it. You will not have what I would deem, anyway, a successful education system if you don't have that caring and sharing.

The leaders of a small education system in a comparatively isolated geogrpahical area were considered vulnerable because they were highly visible to community members, and, in the words of a staff member,

> criticism lands squarely on the shoulders of those well-known family members in the Education Centre . . . rather than on unknown government personnel. . . . This has an effect on local leaders because it can look as though the community is not supporting the program as much as we would like them to, . . . and that's the number one thing we strive for.

> You can't step anywhere in this community without someone realizing, Hey! That's education. . . . People here believe that education is important. . . . If they have something to say about education, . . . they say it!

Specific examples of this attitude were cited in the following comments:

> When leadership decision making affects family relations, such as recruitment of staff . . . or the implementation of disciplinary procedures involving a leader's relative is required, it is difficult. Also, external pressures create pressures within. . . . People get caught up in that sort of competition . . . to get ahead of one another. It's difficult for community members such as the Director and teacher assistants and counsellors and paraprofessionals in other agencies here like Health Services and Social Services. . . . It's a challenge to their integrity.

As suggested by a number of respondents, it was the challenging responsibility of community-based leaders to balance their professional responsibilities with their personal responsibilities in respect to family and relatives.

The co-ordination of the roles and responsibilities of the various local departments was regarded as a significant leadership challenge. "I think one of the main things is that everything has to tie in." Effective communication between departmental agencies was considered to be highly important:

> They used to have what they call interagency meetings, and they were held, I think it was about once a month. Representatives would go from all the different areas--from the Elders' Lodge, from Social Services, Health, Education, Band Administration--and it was basically to kind of let everyone know what was happening in their areas. That hasn't happened. . . . More recently, though, we get a lot of feelings that a lot is put on education, but we're trying to work closely together. This is really necessary in a community, trying to tie in all the resources that you can together.

The need for co-ordination of roles and responsibilities between local departments was considered to be particularly important in the area of student welfare and protection.

A number of respondents expressed a view that more effective co-ordination of intradepartment activities would assist the implementation of prevention-based programs and significantly reduce the current level of attention to management of crisis situations. This feeling was reinforced by one other respondent's view of the system:

> I think right now I would think it's a pretty good system, but there are some things that I think the school cannot resolve, like if it has to do with another program, let's say, social services, then the matter would be referred to Social Services, because I don't think the school can meet all the needs or the concerns of community members.

While the community shared a common purpose in working together to construct and manage a local educational system, a particular and ongoing challenge was the implementation of a balanced curriculum. This challenge was described by a member of staff accordingly:

> I guess the big challenge is always the dilemma between provincial curriculum and local content and where do we get the bulk of our ideas from. Do we want to be basically a provincial school that has a bit of local content, or do we want to be a school that offers a lot of local content with some of the provincial curriculum there just to maintain the ties with the provincial curriculum?

In addressing this challenge, leaders were mindful of the community-shared educational objective of preparing students not merely to survive in the wider world, but also to compete successfully for advanced-education enrolment and/or influential employment positions. It was believed that the lack of local employment opportunities contributed to this challenge:

> The jobs that are here are already held by people that have occupied them for a long time, so we have to start looking and preparing our students to look at jobs on the outside. Of course, this community is situated in an ideal place where it only takes half an hour to go to the nearest city, which is St. Albert or Edmonton. We have to prepare our students for jobs to go out to the outside because, until they start doing something in Economic Development here that will create jobs, the only option for students is to go elsewhere, off this

> reserve, and work in the city. There's nothing else. The other option would be welfare. Work that is available now is only seasonal or part time.

The feelings expressed clearly indicated that options for students leaving the Kipohtakaw Education Centre were an important consideration. For this reason the Education Centre should continue to follow the provincial curriculum but bias it towards college and university entrance. It was believed that this would satisfy community-identified projected needs and longer-term management issues such as qualification of health workers, teachers, and economic managers. "We need complete local control. Therefore, we have to have members from this community in teaching positions."

One of the challenges affecting the continuity of the educational program was what was described as "a pretty high staff turnover." Some of the reasons suggested for this were included in the following opinion:

> I think turnover happens in band-controlled schools largely because there isn't stability in your job: You don't know from one year to the next if you're going to have a job, even from one month to the next; and even, in some situations, from one day to the next I don't think you can be a hundred percent secure. So . . . I think job security is a large part of that. . . . This Board doesn't pay as well as surrounding districts, so that probably has some effect as well, not only on retaining teachers but on getting new ones. So I think those things work against [the leadership] in retaining teachers. You get a core of staff that stay for a while and then move on. . . . It leaves a large gap when several committed people leave at the same time.

On a broader level, a major challenge to leadership were the multiple internal and external forces and pressures experienced by the community:

> There's so many issues that the Chief and Council are always encountering, not only at the community level, but also its connections to the outside, like the ever-changing governing

> policy for . . . Indians, not only in education, but social services, economic development; it's just constantly changing. And I think it's so hard for the leadership to be always on top of all these issues, and yet they're trying to maintain the concerns, too, of their community.

Respondents believed that the strong and informed leadership at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre significantly assists the Chief and Council in managing the diversity of local issues and external challenges in a manner which ensures the promotion of educational opportunities for all members of the community.

Chapter IX

Reflections

Leadership of Local Control

In exploring the beliefs, values, and experiences of members of this unique organisation, the researcher's vision was directed towards a different perspective of educational leadership. This form of leadership seemed to fit one definition of leadership conceptualised by Barth (1990) as "making happen that in which you believe" (p. 171). The practice which emerged during the study consisted of multiple levels of leadership which emanated from the cultural context of the community itself. A community educational leader described leadership relationships in this way:

> It's like this: a circle with rings inside it, and the very centre of the circle is the community, and then the Chief and Council would be next, then the administration, meaning all of the people in the team, and then the teachers and the teacher assistants, with the students being the outer ring.

One meaning of culture reflected in this leadership practice which seemed to fit the researcher's perception of the culture shared by this community was proposed by White (1952; cited in Sergiovanni, 1991):

> The concept of culture refers to the total way of life in a society, the heritage of accumulated social learning, that is shared and transmitted by the members of that society. To put it another way, a culture is a shared set of plans for living, developed out of necessities of previous generations, existing in the minds of the present generation, taught directly or indirectly to new generations. (p. 15)

During many years of shared planning, learning, and transmission of ideas in this community, the culture was perpetuated and enriched by a strong sense of purposing and visionary leadership. Vaill (1984) defined purposing as "that continuous stream of actions by an

organization's formal leadership which has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus and commitment regarding the organization's basic purposes" (p. 91). In exploring the meaning of vision, Sergiovanni (1991) pointed out that "vision is an important dimension of purposing and without it the very point of leadership is missed" (p. 135). Bennis (1984) further clarified the meaning of vision as "the capacity to create and communicate a compelling vision (or paradigm, context frame--all those words serve) of a desired state of affairs, a vision . . . that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to the future" (p. 66). This powerful community leadership force created a plan which was adapted to the environment and integrated with cultural values and beliefs to facilitate educational change. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) referred to this type of change as a multidimensional second-order cultural change. The change transformed the previously imposed education structure into a locally controlled community education centre which is an extension of the local interpretation of the Native Indian Cree culture.

The leadership of meaning and planning had effectively initiated a human emancipation, described by Kemmis (1985):

> Reflection and the fruits of reflection locate us in historical struggle for human emancipation whether implicitly or explicitly. . . . Undertaken in collaboration with others, it is part of the political process by which we may transform irrational, unjust and unfulfilling social practices. (p. 147)

A major shift of power enabled the leadership and stakeholders to prioritise and integrate multiple change processes at the local level within the vision and shared meaning of their cultural realities (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

The community education centre grew from an extension of the culture to a unique education entity. According to Lipsitz (1984), "Extracting effective school practices from one setting and replicating them elsewhere may make a bad mediocre. To become a good school requires a change in vision from within" (p. 216). This assertion is supported by Barth (1990), who stated that "changes in schools may be initiated from without, but the most important and most lasting changes will come from within" (p. 159).

Leadership of Organisational Culture

In assuming local control of the Kipohtakaw Education Centre, community leaders developed an educational philosophy which mirrored the essence of the culture. The challenge to the leadership was to provide an effective organisational structure that would reinforce the culture and satisfy longer- and short-term goals. Sergiovanni (1984) observed the intrinsic relationship of leadership with its organisational context. He drew attention to the complexity and the fragility of the organisation's interactions with the environment: "Understanding organizational life within this view requires that one go beyond descriptions of organizational reality to interpretations of reality, from beyond phenomenon as is to reconstructed phenomenon" (p. 113).

In attempting to conceptualise the education centre's organisational culture as an extension of its Native Indian culture, the researcher discovered a different and richer dimension of organisational culture. The order of culture in educational settings more familiar to the researcher reflected the notion of school organisational culture

aligned to, but not an extension of, a larger culture. This extended culture did not fit that notion.

Owens and Steinhoff (1989) researched the hidden assumptions of organisational culture. They utilised Schein's (1985) theory to explore the manifestations of three levels of culture. Figure 1 shows the interaction of "six identified cultural elements or assumptions which overlap to form a distinctive culture in a school" (p. 9).

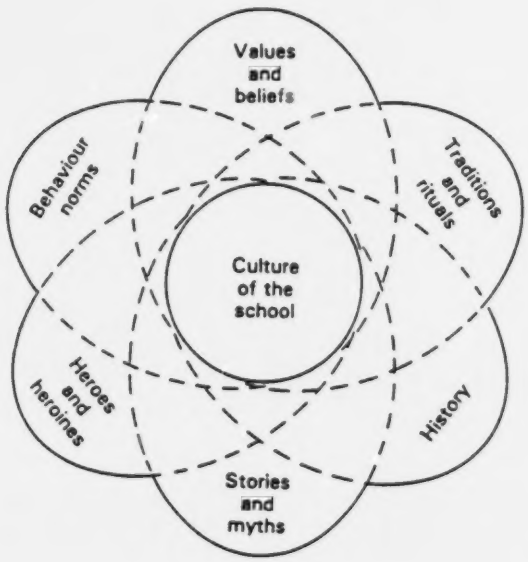

Figure 1. The interaction of cultural elements (Owens & Steinhoff, 1989, p. 9).

According to Owens and Steinhoff,

> In this model the most obvious manifestations of organizational culture are visible and audible artifacts such as tools, buildings, art and technology, as well as patterns of human behaviour including speech. . . . [However,] they are merely symbolic of the culture itself which is not visible. . . . Below this publicly visible level of the manifestation of culture lie the values of the organization . . . usually encoded in a written language such as in a mission statement. (p. 9)

The findings of Owens and Steinhoff (1989) indicated that a mission statement provides a better understanding of the organisational culture, but it is "at the third and most basic level that the essence of the culture is found, . . . taken for granted; invisible and out of consciousness" (p. 9). These unseen assumptions which form patterns but remain implicit concern "the relationships (nature) of individuals to the environment, the nature of reality, time and space, the nature of human activity, the nature of human nature, and the nature of human relationships" (p. 9).

The symbolism of the Native Indian culture which extended to the education centre organisational culture was expressed and preserved through the interaction of the six distinct cultural elements or assumptions depicted in Figure 1. This perpetual interaction and overlapping process implies a dimension of extrinsic complexity for the leadership of the organisational culture. However, in accordance with Schein's (1985) theory, the most practical way to think about organisational culture and, in this case, related to leadership practices at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre is

> to think of it as the total of the collective and shared learning of a system as it develops its capacity to survive in its external environment and to manage its own affairs. Culture is the solution to external and internal problems. (p. 19)

Consistent with Schein's theory, the major leadership challenges identified at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre were related to external survival and internal integration. To assist the management of the organisational culture, Schein recommended the development of a policy infrastructure which includes (1) a philosophy, (2) objectives, (3) organisational structures and decision-making process,

(4) information and control systems, and (5) problem-solving mechanisms. This support was observed as an organisational priority to the leadership at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre and was clearly defined and well documented in the Alexander School Board Policy and Procedures Manual (Alexander School Board, 1990).

Leaders and participants in this organisation exhibited common values, a shared language and ideas, well-defined resource-management procedures, a collaborative climate, and a contingency plan for the management of stressful events. These were regarded by Schein (1980) as essential support to the life of organisational culture and

> promote the view of "organization" as an often complex system in dynamic interaction with multiple environments attempting to fulfill goals and perform tasks at many levels and in varying degrees of complexity, evolving and developing as the interaction with a changing environment forces new internal adaptations. (p. 228)

This dynamic, interactive organisational force challenged the symbolic leadership practices of the Chief and Council, School Board, administration, staff, and student levels of the Kipohtakaw Community Education Centre. According to Sergiovanni (1984),

> The object of symbolic leadership is the stirring of human consciousness, the integration and enhancing of meaning, the articulation of key cultural strands that identify the substance of a school, and the linking of persons involved in the school's activities to them. (pp. 7-8)

Leadership Practices

As suggested previously, leadership practices at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre reflected the cultural essence of the community. The community elected their formal leaders, the Chief and Council, who in turn delegated authority to leaders at the various operational levels of

the organisation. This democratic, collaborative process is compliant with the nature of Indian leadership described in the video "I Am an Indian: The Circle of Leadership" (Spiller et al., 1984; cited in Jules, 1988): "A leader does not go into battle alone; he has the backing of his people" (p. 8). The four qualities of Native Indian leadership identified were (1) leaders have to be close to the people, (2) leaders serve rather than boss, (3) leaders inform the people about what is going on, and (4) leaders must have humility. The shared leadership at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre was trusted by the community. Bennis and Nanus (1985) defined trust as "the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together" (p. 153). The leadership task was to preserve and reinforce the shared meaning of the organisational culture as it survived interaction with the external environment and managed its own affairs. According to Bennis and Nanus, "An essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for members of the organization" (p. 39).

Sergiovanni (1984) further explored the integral role that culture plays in leadership:

> Leadership acts are expressions of culture. Leadership as cultural expression seeks to build unity and order within an organization by giving attention to purposes, historical and philosophical tradition, and ideals and norms which define the way of life within the organization and which provide the bases for socializing members and obtaining their compliance. (pp. 106-107)

The leadership practices which emerged during the study significantly reflected the historical behaviours and values of Native Indian cultural leadership. However, the researcher discovered that this circumstance did not necessarily exclude the application of effective leadership skills and planning strategies associated more with

the non-Native context. Jules (1988) suggested that "developing understanding and knowledge of the valued behaviours and qualities of Native Indian leadership is not intended to exclude developing the skills necessary for being effective administrators" (p. 21). Schein (1985) addressed the integral role that culture plays in leadership by highlighting the issues of which a Native Indian leader would have to become aware in order to become effective. The Hall study (1984) provided a model of leadership that may be appropriate within a Native context; for example, leaders representing a broad range of roles as initiators, managers, and responders (p. 26). Sergiovanni (1984) noted that "quality leadership requires balanced attention to both the tactical and strategic requirements" (p. 105). The 10-P Model of Leadership (Table 1) designed by Sergiovanni combined leadership skills, meanings, antecedents, and culture to present 10 principles of quality leadership (p. 108).

From the researcher's perspective, the insights gained into leadership practices at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre confirmed the application of both tactical and strategic requirements. For example, tactical leadership skills were applied in the team-building and management procedures, resource-management procedures, problem-solving strategies, shared decision-making processes, and collaborative-learning routines. Strategic qualities of leadership emerged through the articulation of philosophy, documentation of clearly defined objectives, shared staff commitment, leadership example, and staff-growth and -development programs. Consistent with Sergiovanni's theory, leadership styles varied markedly at the various operational levels due to individual differences in respective leaders' "feelings, assumptions,

Table 1

The 10-P Model of Leadership (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 108)

Leadership Skills	Prerequisites	Tactical requirements
Leadership Antecedents	Perspective Principles Platform Politics	
Leadership Meanings	Purposing Planning Persisting Peopling	Strategic requirements
Leadership as cultural expression	Patriotism	

cognitive maps and attitudes . . . which determine his or her reality and guide his or her decisions, action and behavior" (p. 108). However, strategic leadership quality and meaning were demonstrated in the collective commitment to the goals of the organisation. "When leadership skills, antecedents and meanings are successfully articulated into practice, we come to see leadership as less a behavioral style or management technique . . . and as more a cultural expression" (p. 111).

Bennis and Nanus (1985) also reminded us of the value of well-informed, committed leadership which empowers its work force: "The

decision-making style is participative and encourages a bottom up flow of ideas aimed at generating consensus around all issues" (p. 120).

This concept was enriched by Schumacher's (1990) contention that a shared decision-making process in which power and not just participation is equitably distributed builds shared-power relationships which explore and satisfy values and differential factors of all participants who sustain the day-to-day culture of the organisation.

The leadership behaviour observed emphasised the importance of suitable role models: "What the leaders stand for and communicate to others is considered important" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 8). The value of identifying suitable role models to perpetuate the culture was reflected in the rigorous selection and recruitment procedures implemented by the leadership. Schein (1985) stated: "It is clear that initial selection decisions for new members followed by the criteria applied on the promotion system are powerful mechanisms for embedding and perpetuating the culture, especially when combined with socialization tactics designed to teach cultural assumptions" (p. 236).

The strategy of employing community members as staff members also encouraged the reinforcement of cultural priorities. Similarly, the priority given to the recruitment of suitable non-Native staff secured the benefit of wider experience, the infusion of ideas, and the blending of cultures, considered by Schein (1985) to assist organisational growth and change mechanisms.

The leaders in collaboration with staff groups identified learning programs and teaching strategies which contributed to increased school, staff, and student effectiveness. This included the achievement of a

balance between the implementation of the Alberta curriculum and the development of culture-related programs.

Leadership practices at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre promoted the personal and professional growth of staff and students at all levels of the organisation. Barth (1990) contended that "the professional growth of teachers is closely related to relationships between staff and leaders and staff and staff" (p. 50). The leadership's encouragement of staff learning together, recorded by a number of respondents during the study, reminded the researcher of the example of Prospect School staff, reported by Barth to be "not inserviced. Instead, they engage in continuous inquiry about teaching. They . . . observe others teach, have others observe them, talk about teaching and help other teachers" (p. 46).

This was similar to the experience described by co-ordinators and staff at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre as "migratory learning" which encouraged reflective practice. As suggested by Schon (1984), "The scope and direction of individual reflection-in-action are shaped by the characteristics of organizational learning systems" (p. 62). The degree of co-operation and level of cohesion exhibited by staff team indicated an understanding of and commitment to the leadership's highly prioritised shared learning goals. Carr and Kemmis (1986) conceptualised this phenomenon as communities of enquirers organizing their own enlightenment through a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and taking responsibility for their own emancipation. "The self-reflective community . . . is not only concerned with the transformation of its own situation. It is also forced to confront the non-educational constraints of education, . . .

education as a totality and its relationships with the social structure beyond education" (p. 209).

Barth (1990) suggested that a community of learners comes from a community of leaders. Furthermore, it was argued by Barth that "without shared leadership it is impossible for a professional culture to exist in a school" (p. 172). He also suggested that staff recognition and growth emanating from shared leadership are the key to staff ownership, productivity, and organisational commitment. "A community of leaders offers independence, interdependence, resourcefulness and collegiality" (p. 145).

The multiple levels of leadership from within Alexander community are representative of community, parents, administrators, staff, and students. In extending community-based cultural practices, this shared leadership has effectively combined Native values and behaviours with Native and non-Native leadership models to build coalitions of leaders and learners. In this way they are "making happen that in which [they] believe" (Barth, 1990, p. 171). The effectiveness of this shared leadership, according to Bennis (1984),

> is measured by the extent to which "compelling vision" empowers others to excel; the extent to which meanings are found in one's work; and the extent to which individual and organization are bonded together by common commitment in a mutually rewarding symbiotic relationship. (p. 71)

It is a view held by the researcher that the community of learners and leaders at the Kipohtakaw Education Centre is effective interpretive and cultural leadership from within.

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Appendix 1

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

The researcher used the following interview guide to conduct semi-structured interviews:

1. How long have you worked with this community education centre? In what capacities? How long have you worked with Indian Education? In what capacities?

2. Tell me about your current role and responsibility in this organization.

3. What do you understand to mean local control of education programs?

4. What is your idea of a successful Native Indian school? To what extent do you feel that this is a successful school?

5. What do you understand to be the philosophy of this school?

6. (a) How would you describe leadership?

   (b) What does leadership mean to you in this organization?

   (c) Who are the leaders in this school?

7. What do you understand to be the processes for decision making in this school?

8. How does the school solve problems?

9. What do you understand to be the processes for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the education program?

10. How would you describe the procedures for the hiring, training, and management of staff?

11. How is finance managed?

12. How are facilities acquired and maintained?

13. How would you describe the nature of the relationship between the school board and the school staff?

14. What is the relationship between the school and the community?

15. (a) What do you regard to be the strengths of leadership practices in this school?

(b) What do you see as special challenges to leadership here?

16. Do you wish to make any further comments?

Appendix 2

Personal Letter

11019 - 84 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 0B6

December 4, 1991

c/o Alexander Education Centre
Alexander Community

Dear _____:

I wish to thank you for your time and the information shared during our recent interview. Attached is the transcript of our interview regarding your perceptions of leadership practices at Alexander (Kipohtakaw) School.

Please read the transcript thoroughly and consider whether or not the transcript conveys your intended meaning. Please feel free to clarify any of your responses and add to the transcript any other ideas that come to mind. If there are particular comments that you would like me to disregard in the data analysis, please delete these comments in the transcript.

I have noted some questions in the margin and would appreciate your clarification of these points.

Once again, I would like to assure you of anonymity and confidentiality. Should you have any questions at any time regarding your involvement in this study, please feel free to call me at 439-4972. Thank you again for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

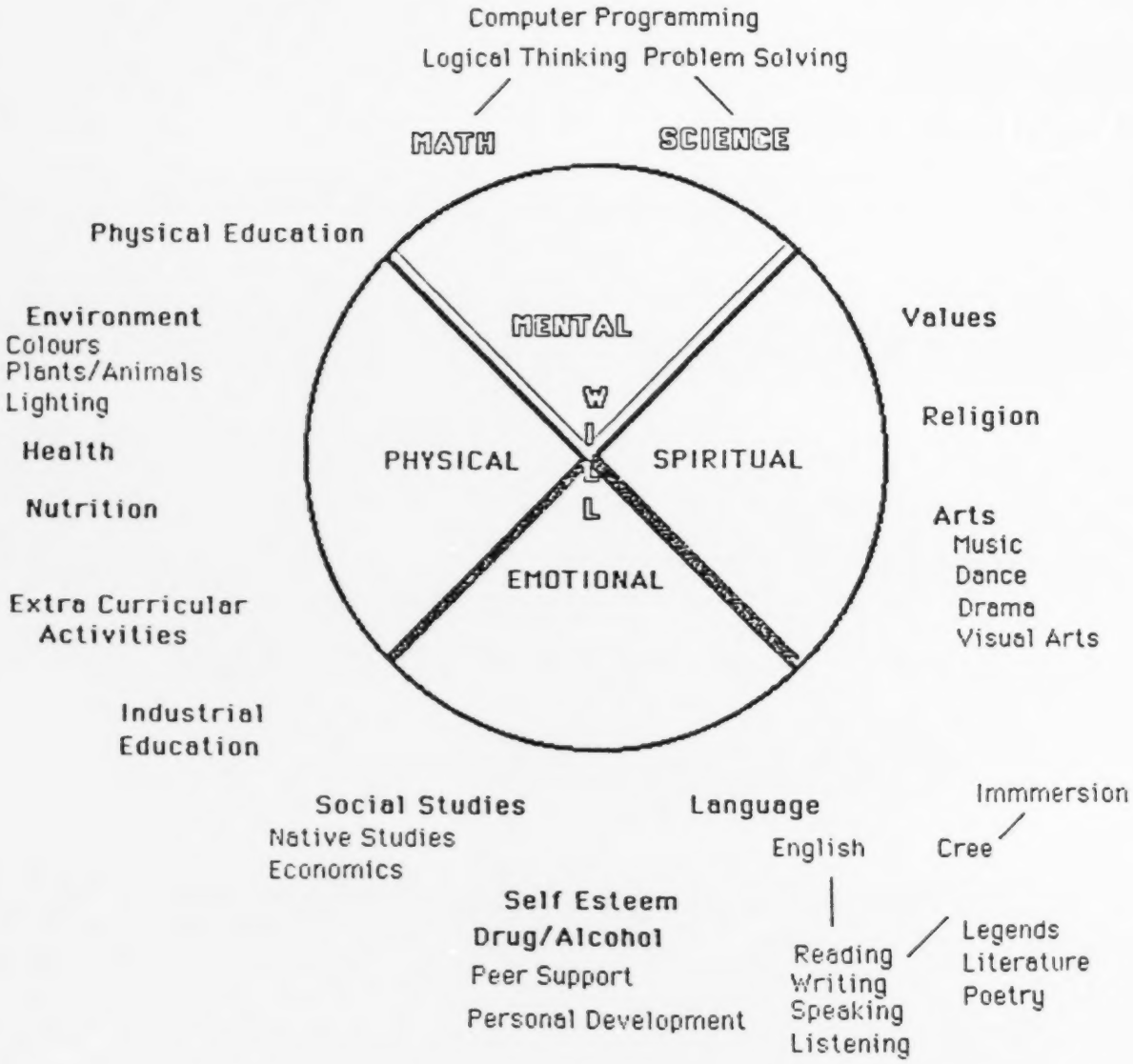
Nell Irwin Lawson

NL/lp
Attach.

Appendix 3

Alexander Model of Curriculum

ALEXANDER MODEL OF CURRICULUM



Source: Kipohtakaw Education Centre

Appendix 4

Kipohtakaw Education Centre

Observation Report and

Student Progress Report

KIPOHTAKAW EDUCATION CENTRE
OBSERVATION REPORT

TEACHER:

PROGRAM/GRADE:

CLASS SIZE:

LESSON OBSERVED:

EVALUATOR:

DURATION OF OBSERVATION:

DATE:

GENERAL COMMENTS:

I. Planning:

a. Curriculum relevance:

b. Cultural relevance:

II. Learning Climate:

III. Teaching Skill:

LESSON PRESENTATION:

I. Presentation of objective:

II. Introduction:

III. Lesson Development:

IV. Closure:

V. Student Involvement:

VI. Teacher's attention to students and situations:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I HAVE READ AND DISCUSSED THIS REPORT. I AM PREPARED TO ACT UPON THE RECOMMENDATIONS.

_____
TEACHER

_____
EVALUATOR

_____
DATE

Source: Kipohtakaw Education Centre

KIPOHTAKAW EDUCATION CENTRE

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT

NAME: _____

GRADE: _____ DATE: _____

TEACHER AND AIDE: _____

Education is a shared responsibility of the student, the teacher, and the parents. We hope that through mutual co-operation your child will achieve his/her potential socially, academically, physically, and spiritually. We hope that you will discuss his/her progress personally with the teacher as we feel this helps us both to fully understand your child's educational needs.

As success in school is closely related to good attendance and good health, children need regular and adequate hours of sleep, and a good balanced diet.

TEACHER COMMENTS

ATTENDANCE

	February	March	April
Days attended			
Days absent			
Possible days			

4 to Apr

PARENT CONFERENCE Yes _____ No _____